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Short stories of to-day

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SHORT STORIES OF TO-DAY

BY

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"He cometh unto you with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner."

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

PREFACE

THIS book is intended to be not merely a short-story anthology, but a laboratory manual for the guidance of students in intelligent reading and original composition. It offers, for the purpose of study, many good stories of recent date selected for their literary merit as well as for their intrinsic interest, and suggests, in appended lists, many others for review, which a library may supply. At least one question upon each story suggests another story, usually an older one, with which it may be profitably compared. Others for like comparison may be collected by the teacher in a canvass of the class. A class library of such stories will double the efficiency of the book. The suggestions for original writing which follow each story offer opportunities for creative work. Growing as it did from actual classroom experience, this collection should make a direct appeal to students. If other teachers using this book find, as its editor has done, that the stories it contains impart genuine enjoyment to their classes, and its suggestions for study lead to a more critical evaluation by the student of the mass of fiction constantly being published in our magazines, the aim of the book will have been realized.

The publishers and editor wish to acknowledge gratefully the courtesy and coöperation of the authors, publishers, and friends who have made this collection possible.

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TO THE PUPIL

THIS introduction, as well as the stories here collected, is intended for you, the student who has elected a course in the short story or been hurled into such a course by curriculum demands. However guilty you may have been in times past in the matter of skipping introductions, you are asked to read carefully these few introductory pages, and to master the technical information found here, that you may bring to the reading of the stories in the collection a more intelligent appreciation.

Every student reads short stories. Their brevity and accessibility commend them as a pleasant means of passing idle moments. Last year thousands of short stories were published in American magazines and hundreds more in book form. Many of these you may have read. Did you enjoy all alike, or did you read with discrimination, realizing that in such a mass of material there were both chaff and wheat? Are you trying to set a standard by which you may judge a story, or are you content with such criticism as "good story" or "I don't think much of that"? Wide reading followed by casual criticism has its worth, since it affords familiarity with many examples; but careful reading and evaluation are of greater importance to the student. Could you select from your last year's reading five short stories of marked distinction, and defend your choice by definite reasons? Could you name five older short stories of recognized worth and show why they have outlived their contemporaries in popular favor? These two questions suggest the double purpose of this collection — to select for you from recent publications short stories which are well-constructed, vital in content, and worthy of study, and through these to direct you to the reading of good stories of an earlier date. The book is in your hands, completed as to form, but demanding your coöperation for its final success. In one small volume it is impossible to give more than a few notable examples. You should not feel, however, that you have completed the course when you have read the stories here reprinted.

If you fail to read and study an equal number of the older short stories suggested in lists and study helps, you will have used the book at only half its intended worth. Likewise if you fail to make your own the minimum of technical information which the editor has seen fit to include in the introduction, you will have neglected an obvious means of strengthening your standards of judgment.

By all means read the story first for mere enjoyment, finishing it at a sitting without thought of technical terms or critical analysis. Then turn to the Suggestions for Study and see if they do not send you back to the story for a second reading. Finally, take part in the class discussion, defend or alter your opinions as the case may be, and try to gain from your study a more just appreciation of what is good and a more intelligent condemnation of what is bad or merely futile.

The original writing suggested after each story should take the place of formal written reports upon the stories here reprinted. In the case of other stories chosen from the appended lists formal reports may follow the form below suggested, which will prove more convenient than haphazard notes.

1. *Name of Story — Author.*
2. *Principal Characters.* Follow each with a characterizing sentence, a quotation from the story if you wish.
3. *The Plot.* Condense the plot to a few sentences. This may require practice, but it will prove an excellent exercise in straight thinking.
4. *The Setting.* State where the story takes place and discuss briefly the relation of the setting to the plot.
5. *Personal Comment.* This is the most important item in the report. If you do not like a story, say so. If you have read another story somewhat similar, compare the two. If the reading has stirred you to thought along any line, express your thoughts here. Be yourself. Say what you think. The first four items are merely a matter of record; the last is your own reaction to the story and should bear the stamp of your originality.

TO THE TEACHER

WITHIN recent years courses in the short story have become general in our schools and colleges. Although good stories have been told or written in every age, the short story as a clearly differentiated type is a comparatively modern conception, and was given a place of its own in the course of study only after it had gained general recognition and had gathered about itself a considerable mass of technical theory. Having once broken into the school curriculum, it has shown remarkable ability to hold its own. The reasons for its popularity are not hard to find. Its compact form offers unique opportunities for the study of narrative structure, and its simplicity surpasses for laboratory purposes the more complex form of the novel with its more involved plot, numerous characters, and elaborate setting. It is, as well, less formidable to the pupil as an example of narrative composition. Many a student who would never dream of attempting to write a novel will try the shorter form to the enrichment of his powers of appreciation and expression. The chief reason, however, for the popularity of the short story in courses of study in high schools and colleges is not its convenience as a unit of study, but its inherent appeal to the student. The short story is very close to life. It reflects the many phases of our complex modern existence, reproduces its dramatic situations, points its meanings, throws the light of a new interpretation upon its commonplace content. The young student has a right to know literature in the making as well as in the past, not that he may learn to despise anything that bears the stamp of age, but that he may intelligently compare past and present and choose from each what seems to him worth while. The eagerness with which high-school and college students have hailed courses in the short story is only one phase of their insistence upon this right of individual judgment and selection.

The study of the short story does not require an elaborate manual of technical information. Enjoyment of a good story is possible without comprehension of the laws underlying its

structure. For that matter, enjoyment of any art is possible without technical knowledge, but who will say that such knowledge does not increase both degree and quality of appreciation? An understanding of the accepted requirements of the short story, familiarity with the terms commonly used in its analysis and criticism, and a general knowledge of its development as a separate type are merely the tools with which a student should provide himself before beginning the study of the short story. This introduction attempts to provide those tools in a simple and usable form.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHORT STORY

Defining the Short Story

What are the characteristics which distinguish the short story from other literary forms? The term *short story* is so often loosely used to designate any form of prose narrative that the student can with profit attempt some answer to this question. Yet in the work of definition he finds himself obliged to proceed warily; on the one hand is the danger of defining too broadly, on the other the equal danger of limiting too narrowly. If he recognizes the short story as a distinct literary form, he must exclude from classification with it such kindred forms as the sketch, the tale, and the short novel. At the same time, he must remember that the short story is a variable, growing form and not a scientific specimen to be be labeled too exactly. "The short story is a short prose narrative," is too inclusive a definition. "A short story is a prose narrative dealing with a single character and presenting one action in one place on one day," fails just as surely as a definition, since it excludes at once many short stories justly regarded as excellent examples of the type. If the student should compose a satisfactory definition, couch it in learned terms, and fancy that he had achieved a formula which would apply in all cases, what would happen? Straightway some one with a tale to tell and a spark of genius to light the telling would defy his hard-and-fast definition and produce a masterpiece which would laugh at formulæ. Genius can always laugh at definitions. Perhaps the safest course for the young student would lie in comparing what others have said by way of definition, thus thrusting the burden upon older and more experienced critics. If critics are at all agreed, the student should find in the elements common to their definitions an enumeration of the characteristics of the short story.

W. B. Pitkin emphasizes two elements, the single effect and the dramatic quality, and sums up his conclusions in this single sentence: "The short story is therefore a narrative drama with a single effect."[1]

[1] *Short Story Writing*, p. 21. The Macmillan Company, 1912.

Blanche Colton Williams says: "The short story is a narrative presenting characters in a struggle or complication which has a definite outcome."[1]

J. B. Esenwein, after tabulating the characteristics of the short story, combines them in this didactic statement: "A short story is a brief, imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single chief character, by means of a plot, the details of which are so compressed and the whole so organized that a single impression is produced."[2]

Clayton Hamilton says by way of definition: "The aim of a short story is to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis."[3]

Dr. Henry Seidel Canby wisely avoids a formal definition, but gives as the distinguishing characteristic of the short story "a conscious impressionism, a deliberate attempt to convey a single impression of a mood, or emotion, or situation, to the reader." The short story, he asserts, has its rise in "situations requiring swift, brief, and vivid narrative."[4]

The short story has, it would seem from these statements, certain generally accepted characteristics, a summary of which will prove more practical than a formal definition.

1. The short story is a brief prose narrative developing a single dramatic incident.
2. It presents a single chief character or a unified group of characters in a situation involving struggle or conflict.
3. It moves forward with such artistic selection and compression of detail as to leave with the reader a single impression.

The Structure of the Short Story

Edgar Allan Poe was the first writer to formulate the theory of the short story as a distinct form. In a magazine article published in 1842, he stated the principles which he believed should govern the construction of the short story. One passage is especially significant.

[1] *A Handbook on Storywriting*, p. 7. Dodd, Mead & Co., 1917.
[2] *Writing the Short Story*, p. 30. The Home Correspondence School Press, 1908.
[3] *Materials of Fiction*, p. 173. Doubleday, Page & Co., 1912.
[4] *The Short Story in English*, chap. xv. Henry Holt & Co.

"A skillful artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents — he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his initial sentence tends not to the out-bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the preëstablished design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction."

In this passage Poe emphasizes the single effect. To produce such an effect the writer must first of all possess clearness of vision, must see with absolute certainty the exact impression which he wishes to create. To this foresight must be added the gift of originality which will enable him to invent belief-compelling incidents and to combine these with the skill necessary to force home the desired impression. Because he is concerned chiefly with this singleness of effect or unity of impression, economy in material becomes necessary. Not a detail of plot or setting or characterization must be included unless by its inclusion the unity of the whole is perfected. There must be economy, too, in the number of characters. Usually a single character dominates the story, and the lesser characters are important only as they affect this major character. Singleness of effect demands, moreover, concentration even in the treatment of the dominant character. A single situation in his life becomes the plot, a single trait in his character determines his action in the given situation. *The Luck Piece*, by Irvin S. Cobb, concerns the pursuit by the New York police of a man who has committed a murder. So cleverly has the murderer covered all evidence of his crime that the police are puzzled. But the murderer is superstitious, and his superstition sends him back over his trail in search of a luck piece which he dares not lose. The man was a criminal with material for many stories in his past, with many characteristics also which might equally well have motivated a plot, but for the purpose of this story the author chooses one incident, his escape after a murder,

and one characteristic, the superstition which leads to his return and finally to his capture. The unity of the whole is emphasized in the title, *The Luck Piece.*

Brander Matthews says: "No one has ever succeeded as a writer of short stories who had not ingenuity, originality, and compression; and most of those who have succeeded in this line had also the touch of fantasy."[1] Such statements as this and the passage from Poe quoted above may discourage the young writer. "No use for me to try," he may say. But let him remember that critics from Poe to Brander Matthews have been speaking of skilled workers, men and women who have perfected their art through long effort. In order to produce the artistic results which so satisfy the critics they have mastered certain technical requirements. Consciously or unconsciously, they have conformed to the accepted principles of short-story structure. The young writer has his apprenticeship before him; he also may learn the craft, and, if it so happens that genius is added to his knowledge, he may exalt craft to art and become a master. For such young writers and for students who wish to understand rather than to produce, the principles governing short-story structure are next to be considered under three divisions: plot, characterization, and setting.

Plot

In simplest terms plot may be defined as what happens in a story. But for the student of short-story structure such a definition needs qualification. A man desires to purchase a certain old house. If he has the money and all parties to the transaction are satisfied, he buys the house, but no story exists. No obstacle has appeared to disturb the orderly course of events and to create a plot situation. Let us suppose, however, that the matter is not so simple. One of two old ladies who own the house refuses to sell. Despite her need of money, she cannot bring herself to part with a house which has so long been the home of her family. The man, moreover, has a strong motive for desiring the house, having reason to believe that a valuable paper is hidden there in a secret drawer. The element of conflict or struggle has entered into the situation and made a story

[1] *The Philosophy of the Short Story.* Longmans, Green & Co.

possible. In other words, plot exists where before it did not. To entangling circumstances such as the man's motive for wishing to buy and the old lady's obstinate refusal, the term *complication* is technically applied. In its derivation *complication* means a folding together or twisting of threads or lines, in our supposed case the entanglement of the man's line of interest with that of the old lady. If the story is to have unity, one of these lines must be subordinated to the other. The author's purpose, the single effect desired, would determine which is to be of primary importance. If the story is to hinge upon the discovery of hidden treasure, the man's line of interest becomes primary, the old lady's secondary. The author may, on the other hand, wish to write a story of character in which the old lady's obstinate attachment to the home leads to the discovery of a long-sought deed and saves her family from poverty. In such a case the old lady becomes the dominant character in the story, and the would-be purchaser's line of interest is subordinated to hers. In either case such a complication as has been imagined must lead to a determining *crisis*. Something must happen either to give the man his way and allow him to find the hidden paper or to permit the old lady to save her family home. Complication in a story should lead inevitably to a crisis or a crucial situation which determines the rest of the story. The terms *climax* and *crisis* are often used interchangeably, but exact analysts of the short story distinguish between them, considering crisis as a critical situation in the story and climax the single point of intense interest, usually occurring just after the crisis and resulting from it. The series of incidents leading up to the major crisis is technically called the *involution* of the plot. The *resolution* or *evolution* of the plot follows the crisis and tells what happens to the characters because of the crisis.

The Necklace, by Guy de Maupassant, is an excellent story for the study of plot. M. Loisel, a petty government clerk in Paris, is married to a pretty, ambitious young wife. In such a situation there are obvious plot possibilities, but some inciting force is needed to set the action going. Such a force is supplied when the young couple receive an invitation to a ball. As a result of this, two events, of sufficient significance to be called minor crises, involve the young couple in a tragic entanglement; the

wife borrows a necklace from a friend and after the ball discovers that it has been lost. The poor couple, despairing at last of finding the necklace, resolve to replace it. Having borrowed five hundred francs here and three louis there, given notes, and mortgaged his earnings for years to come, M. Loisel "went for the new necklace and put down upon the merchant's counter the thirty-six thousand francs." Here is the major crisis, the point of change which determines the future of the young couple. Up to this point the reader's interest has been absorbed in the one question, "What will happen next?" There is now a shifting of the interest and the dominant question becomes, "What will be the effect of these events upon the young couple?" We are interested first in how the characters get into difficulties, and next in how they get out and with what results; in other words, in the involution and evolution of the plot. The climax occurs, not, as in most stories, immediately after the major crisis, but at the very end of the story.

Some form of conflict is essential to plot. This conflict need not be with a human or visible enemy. The plot of *The Necklace* had its inception in the lack of harmony between the social ambition of Mme. Loisel and the conditions of her life; and it moved forward to its dramatic conclusion through a series of struggles against material obstacles and an ironic fate. Out of the struggle of Selina Jo with her environment grew the story of *Prelude*. In the conflict between Tedge and the Nemesis which pursues the evil doer to his ruin, the story, *The Man Who Cursed the Lilies*, achieves its intense dramatic effect. In *The Heart of Little Shikara* the plot concerns the struggle between man and animal, or, as the author expresses it, between civilized man and "the gods of the jungle always waiting with drawn scimitar for the unsuspecting." Even in a humorous story, such as *A Man in the House*, by Elsie Singmaster, the humor arises from the clash of emotions in the hearts of the two old ladies, their long-cherished aversion to dogs in conflict with their fear of invasion by strangers. *The Face in the Window* illustrates in a threefold way the significance of conflict in plot structure. We are interested successively in Cora McBride's struggle with herself before deciding to set out in search of the criminal, her battle with the cold in the snow-covered Vermont

hills, and her encounter with the maniac in the deserted cabin. These three phases of conflict are the steps by which the story marches forward to the climax, the appearance of the silhouette at the window and the collapse of Hap Ruggam.

Suspense

In a story of plot the first purpose is to excite and hold the reader's interest. The author who handles his plot well will arouse throughout his story a feeling of *suspense*, a consciousness at each new incident that important consequences are to follow. In a story of slight plot, the element of suspense is only a quiet interest in what will happen next; in a horror story such as Poe loved to create suspense becomes a breathless absorption in the outcome. This quality is one to be used sparingly by the inexperienced writer. If overstrained or obtained by artificial means, suspense tends only to arouse in the reader distrust of the author's sincerity. "Why all this stir about nothing?" he asks. Suspense must come naturally and be excited primarily by the inherent dramatic quality of the plot.

A good example of the restrained use of suspense is found in *The Necklace*. Mme. Loisel has borrowed a necklace to wear to a ball. After her return from the ball she discovers that the necklace is lost and her husband goes in search of it.

"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole distance we walked, to see if I can't find it."

And he went out. She sat there on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without thought.

Her husband came back about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

There is real suspense here. Upon the outcome depends the future happiness of the young couple, but there is no sentimental agonizing on the part of the author. The picture of the wife overwhelmed by her misfortune is followed by the single sentence announcing the failure of her husband's search. Our feeling of suspense comes from our consciousness of the importance and intense reality of the situation. Later in the story suspense is further heightened by the author's device of holding back the climax until the very end of the story when, after ten years of grinding poverty, the wife learns that the necklace was of paste and worth at most five hundred francs.

Characterization

The portrayal of character in a story is quite as important as the plot. Indeed, in the opinion of some, it ranks first. One editor says: "The main requirement of a good story is that it should present one or more real human beings; in other words characterization is the thing." We may safely say that the two, plot and character, should be conceived together. If Mme. Loisel had not been a vain, socially ambitious young woman, the story of *The Necklace* could not have been. Maupassant, economical as he is with detail, devotes several initial paragraphs to making the reader realize her character and her unhappiness in her sordid environment. With an artist's sense of values he realizes that plot alone is not enough; character, too, must stand out with convincing reality.

The creation of characters which seem to live and act as human beings rather than as puppets is the concern of every writer of short stories. In accomplishing this result the author may use various methods. Direct description is the means to which the inexperienced writer resorts first. This has, of course, its proper place in characterization, but for conservation of space and unity of effect it must be used sparingly. The novelist can devote whole paragraphs to direct description of character, but the short story writer does better if he uses here a phrase, there a sentence. In *Sheener* Ben Ames Williams uses little direct description. "Evans," he tells us, "would laugh in a barking fashion that with his long, bony countenance always suggested to me a coughing horse." But this description serves only to set the physical Evans before us; for the characterization of the real Evans, the man behind the long, bony countenance, he relies upon another means, the dramatic method of setting his character in action and allowing him to betray himself. In the case of Sheener he introduces him briefly as a Jewish newsboy and then sets him to talking in the easy slang of the New York streets. Through the narrative of the newspaper man whom the author has invented as his spokesman, we see the beginning of Sheener's romantic attachment to the disreputable old Evans, his futile efforts to keep the old man straight, and the tragic moment of repudiation when he says huskily, "Hell! A gent like him can't let on that he knows a guy like me." The dramatic method, which employs speech

and action with only the indispensable amount of direct description, is the one most generally and most effectively used. In a third method, that of characterization by analysis, the author assumes the rôle of omniscience, and, looking into the inner consciousness of his characters, reports and analyzes what he sees there. In *Footfalls* Wilbur Daniel Steele uses this method in his first characterization of Boaz Negro. "He was happy," we are told. "An unquenchable exuberance lived in him." And this in spite of the scourging of fate in his blindness and in the loss of wife and sons. But even in a story like *Footfalls*, in which psychological rather than material elements are important and where the analytical method might seem especially suitable, we find the author relying chiefly upon the dramatic method.

The convincing writer makes action the natural outcome of character. Inexperienced readers often demand of fictive characters a perfection which could not exist in real life. The desire for a happy ending is likely to blind the judgment. When Ben Ames Williams makes Evans repudiate Sheener in the end, pupils may exclaim, "I don't like the ending. He should have been repaid for all he had done." But could the author have ended the story otherwise without violating the principles of truth? Read the story carefully, with attention to every character hint, and then discuss the question. In the story, *Mateo Falcone*, by Mérimée, the Corsican father kills his own son. Horrible as this may seem, it is the only ending possible. Place a Corsican father, steeped in the ideals of honor peculiar to his country, in a situation in which his own son betrays those ideals, and a tragedy is the logical outcome. Perhaps not every Corsican father would have acted as did Mateo Falcone; but Mérimée's art lies in this, that he makes us believe such action inevitable. The author must convince us that the acts of any given character are determined, as in real life, by what he is or by what environment has made him.

When the student reads *A Man in the House*, by Elsie Singmaster, he will feel the excellent characterization of the two old ladies. Different as they are from the people whom most of us know, they never for one moment permit us to challenge the reality of their existence. The secret of their vitality lies in the fact that they did not spring, like Athena, fully grown from the head of their creator. Mysteriously derived from some germi-

nal idea or impression, they are self-determining creations endowed with power of growth into individual beings. In an article in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, Elsie Singmaster throws this interesting light upon her relations with her characters: "In the beginning my characters have a somewhat shadowy personality, suggested by an acquaintance or some of the traits of an acquaintance, or perhaps by some one seen only for a few moments. They may have their origin in the exigencies of the plot in which they are to figure. As the story develops they develop with it, until they become rounded beings. If they are suggested by a living person, they are very apt to cease to resemble him or her and become entirely different individuals."

Setting

In a short story, as in a novel, the author must set his own stage. No property man is at hand to provide a background of gloomy forest or cheerful cottage interior. The author has, moreover, a short time in which to work, since the short story at its longest is limited to several thousand words. The novelist can draw in his background with leisurely detail; the short story writer must make every stroke count toward the desired effect. Setting or background is not equally important in all stories. In a story of Corsican life, such as *Mateo Falcone*, both setting and characterization are closely bound up with the plot. Only in a country like Corsica could such a story have its setting. A setting of that kind may be called organic or structural in that it is closely woven into the fiber of the story. *To Build a Fire*, by Jack London, is another example of such setting. Despite the warnings of his friends, a man new to the Alaskan winter sets out on a journey alone when the thermometer is fifty degrees below zero. A struggle ensues between man and nature. So vivid is the setting that the Alaskan cold seems almost to become a second character and to struggle visibly with the man. When the traveler's last attempt at a fire flickers and dies out on the snow, we know that winter has won the fight. In *The Man Who Cursed the Lilies* we have another example of organic or structural setting. The lily-choked swamps of southern Louisiana are not mere background in this story, but a determining element of plot and characterization. In other stories setting is less vital. The story of *The Necklace*

takes place in Paris, especially in that part of Paris where clerks of small salary are wont to live. The setting is, however, merely scenic, serving the purpose of a back drop upon the stage. By a change of names from French to English and the alteration of a few minor details, the scene of the story might just as well be laid in London. The story of *Sheener* might have evolved in any one of several cities, or in a factory as well as in a newspaper office. In the matter of setting, one type is not to be preferred to the other, but the choice is determined altogether by the purpose of the author and the emphasis which he desires. In most stories, however, setting is intimately bound up with plot and character; what a character is and what he does in a crisis is the natural outgrowth of his environment or setting.

When the curtain rises at the theater, we look eagerly for the stage setting. We see, it may be, the office of a large department store with the light of a late afternoon sun in the western windows; but we get from the setting more than a picture of time and place. We receive, let us say, an impression of worried strain, a feeling of hurry and vague uneasiness, and this impression is the *atmosphere* of the place. Mr. W. B. Pitkin has happily defined atmosphere in a story as "The emotional flavor of the place and time in which the dramatic events unfold." Atmosphere is something more than the result of careful working out of details of setting and character; it is the feeling which the author in some intangible way transmits to us by means of these details. *Markheim* by Robert Louis Stevenson, while essentially a psychological story, is one of our best examples of the creation of atmosphere. The old shop with its mysterious shadows, the antique mirrors uncannily reflecting more than mere form, the chiming of the many clocks in varied tones create an atmosphere in keeping with the murder which constitutes the plot. Another example of atmosphere in setting is found in *The Heart of Little Shikara*, which reproduces for us the mysterious depths of the jungle — the breathless silence broken only by the snapping of a twig, the weird purplish light of the jungle moon probing down through the tall bamboos.

Stories of setting are often stories of *local color*. Atmosphere in a story seeks to express the soul of time and place; local color presents more tangible features, the dialect, dress, scenery, and customs of some particular place or period of time. Local color

comes from the inclusion of those characteristic details which make a place or period of time different from other places and other times. If we study Kipling's *Namgay Doola*, we find that the means used to obtain local color are the geographical names, the topographical description of the country, the manners and customs of the people. Even dialect, while not actually used, is suggested in the elaborate and highly complimentary language of the natives. In this story Kipling uses local color freely but not to the obscuring of plot and character. Even when the story is one of local color and the setting structurally related to the plot, the author must be careful to subordinate this element to his one important task, the telling of his story. Local color must not be something imposed from without, but must be a part of the very fiber of the story material. When one says after reading a story, "I liked that because I learned from it so much about South Africa or northern Canada," the chances are that he has picked a poor story, and a geographical reader would have served his purpose as well. In the best stories of local color details of time, custom, locality, or dialect are so skillfully worked into the plot and characterization that they cease to have importance in themselves. After reading *Prelude* we have a real picture of life among the poor whites of the South, but a picture in which the story of one central character so dominates our interest that details of setting become merely contributory. Although *The Doctor of Afternoon Arm* is rich in the local color of Labrador, our final impression is not of the place but of the doctor's heroism. In *The Bedquilt*, by Dorothy Canfield, characterization and setting are inextricably interwoven, Aunt Mehetabel and her family seeming to have been transplanted to the story straight from the soil of New England.

The study of local-color stories may especially interest certain classes or individual pupils, and for these Appendix A 2 has been provided. A trip through our country with the short-story writers has afforded enjoyable and profitable oral recitation work for other classes and may well do the same for you.

The Rise of the Short Story

The art of story-telling is as old as language itself. Primitive man doubtless listened with eager attention as one of his

more imaginative companions related the story of an encounter with some animal, embellishing his tale with half-believed details of his own valor or of supernatural assistance. The world for him was a place of wonder, of natural phenomena which he was too ignorant of science to explain. From his interpretation of the physical world sprang the old mythologies, which peopled tree and stream with supernatural beings and wove about them tales of wonder. The Greek epic hero may owe his being to primitive man's fondness for exalting himself and his valorous deeds. From relating one's own adventures with some boastful exaggeration to inventing a hero and endowing him with extraordinary powers of conception and accomplishment was not a long step. The Greek epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, are the greatest contribution of ancient man to the progress of story-telling. The blind bard, singing his songs in the market-place or beside the hearth in some Greek hall, felt his hearers thrill in response to his heroic tale. The art of story-telling is social in its origin, and its progress is bound up with the great racial and social movements of the world.

In Oriental literature good narratives are frequently found. The Bible particularly is rich in them. The Book of Jonah, which dates several centuries before Christ, needs only slight modification to become an excellent short story. The Book of Ruth is a simple tale beautifully told. The stories of David and Goliath, Queen Esther, the Prodigal Son, the Wise and Foolish Virgins are only a few of the Biblical narratives which might be included in any story-teller's repertoire.

Two most remarkable medieval collections of tales are *The Decameron*, by the Italian Boccaccio (1313–75), and *The Canterbury Tales*, by the English poet Chaucer (1340–1400). Both use a fictive framework by which to connect their stories. Boccaccio has a group of Florentine men and women take refuge from the plague in a villa, where they beguile the time by telling stories. His feeling for a good story makes his collection worth while in interest as well as in the portrayal of medieval life. Chaucer gathers his pilgrims at the Tabard Inn, where they decide to lighten the tedium of the journey to Canterbury by telling tales upon the way. In the *Prologue* he introduces his characters and sets the stage for the story-telling contest. His skill in characterization and the clever way in which he fits each

story to its narrator are quite as remarkable as the stories themselves. *The Canterbury Tales* afford examples of most narrative forms in use during medieval times; but the consideration of these forms is appropriate to college rather than to high-school courses.

In a condensed survey of the development of the short story not much need be said of the centuries between Chaucer and the beginning of the eighteenth century. There was, it is true, some advance in the art of story-telling, which in England found its chief expression in the drama. In other countries spasmodic efforts showed little advance upon what had already been done in medieval times. Early in the eighteenth century the rise of the periodical essay in England made an important contribution. Most students who use this book will have read the *Spectator Papers* and will remember with what interest they traced the story of Sir Roger and the widow from paper to paper. Certain characters in these papers will doubtless stand out with the distinctness of separate creations: poor Moll White, suspected of being a witch; Tom Touchy, about to "have the law" on a neighbor; Will Honeycomb, gallant collector of amatory experiences. The narrative essay, of course, had no well-defined plot and was far removed in type from the modern short story, but its contribution of greater human interest and more vital characterization has a place in the development of narrative whether in novel or short story. The form in which these essays appeared was in itself important since, as the social origin of his art would indicate, an audience is essential to the story-teller. The periodical essay through its accessible form furnished such an audience, and doubtless fostered in its readers a taste for the narratives with which it forced home more didactic matter.

At this point in the history of the short story America became an actor. Early in the nineteenth century Washington Irving began writing tales which far surpassed earlier American narratives in finish and originality, and which, in spite of their obvious debt to the *Spectator Papers*, won him instant recognition in England. Irving's tales are closely related in content and workmanship to the modern short story, but kinship does not imply identity in form. *Rip Van Winkle* is one of the best tales ever written, but it is not a short story. "Why not?"

some student may ask. "It is a short imaginative narrative concerned with one character and one predominating incident." Such a question we might answer with another: What different use would the modern short-story writer make of the material in *Rip Van Winkle?* First of all, he would find himself faced with the problem of selection. He would see in this tale the germs of at least three different short stories: a humorous story of Rip's home life, a fantastic story of the supernatural in Hendrik Hudson's goblin crew among the mountains, a story of dramatic incident in Rip's return to find his world vanished and a new one in its place. Having chosen one of these according to his temperament, he would next decide upon the particular effect he wished to produce and the plot which would best further this effect. Finally with careful choice of detail he would develop this plot steadily and without digression. His finished product might not be a good short story, but it could not be a tale. The short story is governed by selection, compression, concentration of effect; the tale is less bound by the laws of form, less intensive in effect, and more extensive in detail. Irving was an inimitable story-teller, but he was influenced by an ideal very different from that of the modern short-story writer. He says: "For my part, I consider a story merely as a frame upon which to stretch my materials. It is the play of thought, and sentiment, and language; the weaving in of characters, lightly, yet expressively delineated." Such an ideal provides for the leisurely style, the enjoyment of detail, and the evenly distributed interest which characterize *Rip Van Winkle*, but does not meet the demands of the modern critic and writer. Dr. Brander Matthews expects of the short story that it "vigilantly exclude everything that might interfere with its singleness of intention."[1] John Galsworthy, in the Foreword to *Caravan*,[2] expresses somewhat the same thought in a figurative way: "As the untaught spider spins his delicate rose-window and assures it against wind and rain by sheer adjustment — not a thread too many or too few — so let us writers of short tales try to spin out of our own instinct and vision the round and threaded marvel." The symmetry of design, the radiation from a common center, which suggests Mr. Galsworthy's figure is

[1] *The Philosophy of the Short Story.* Longmans, Green & Co.
[2] Charles Scribner's Sons.

lacking in Irving's tales. In this respect they are not, in the modern sense, short stories.

The credit for having first consciously formulated the theory of the short story is usually given to Edgar Allan Poe. In 1842 he published a review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, in which he devoted several hundred words to an exposition of his theory, a passage from which is quoted elsewhere in this Introduction. That essay tended to fix for all time the line of demarcation between the tale and the short story. Poe's brilliant stories, consistently carrying out his theory of the single impression, were perhaps the largest single influence in the development of the modern short story. He transformed into art the horror stories which he found already popular, he invented the modern detective story, and he was the first great master of technique in the modern short story.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was contemporary with Poe, must not be omitted from even a brief survey of the beginning of the short story in America. Dr. Canby says of him, "It is in substance that he rendered his greatest service."[1] Judging the structure of his story, *The Ambitious Guest*, by the standard set by Poe, we find its movement too slow, too much involved in philosophical comment when the swift current should be carrying us on to the catastrophe. But in substance this, like most of Hawthorne's stories, shows an unerring sense for the dramatic climax, a feeling for the single situation and the relation of the characters to the situation. Hawthorne contributed to the modern short story greater breadth of subject-matter. His stories of New England history, such as *Endicott and the Red Cross*, *The Maypole of Merry Mount*, or *Young Goodman Brown*, are distinctly American in flavor; at the same time they are not folk-tales, but rather single situations with high human value, just such situations as our present short-story writers are quick to catch and translate for us.

While Irving, Hawthorne, and Poe were developing a distinct type of short story in America, literature abroad was turning to the same form of expression. In France especially the short story was becoming a chosen form. The influence of Poe was strongly felt in France, where translations of his work found instant recognition. The French are an artistic race and were

[1] *The Short Story in English.* Henry Holt & Co.

quick to see in Poe a master of style. Gautier, Mérimée, Flaubert, Coppée, Maupassant, and Daudet are names of distinction in the history of the short story in French. In Russia also there was a similar development, short stories tinged with the characteristic gloom of the Russian people, but showing in form the influence of Poe and the French writers. In England the development of the short story was slow. The popularity of the novel in that country, its variety, and its uniform excellence left little room for the perfection of a kindred form. Although many novelists had occasionally written short stories, the novel had remained preëminently the chosen form.

The novel and the short story trace their ancestry to the same source; both acknowledge their debt to the myths, fables, tales, and romances of the past. It is no wonder, then, that the development of one form has invariably reacted upon the other. While the short story was developing in America and France, Bulwer, Dickens, Kingsley, the Brontës, Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope, and Reade were writing novels in England; and the subject-matter of these novels, the observation of life upon which they were based, the accurate portrayal of real character inevitably enriched the American short story. As Professor Fred Lewis Pattee has pointed out in an interesting essay, *The Status of the American Short Story*, the lack of an international copyright law at the time when England was so rich in novelists was influential in turning American authors to the short story form rather than to the novel. With no copyright law English novels could be published free, and the publication of American novels, for which the authors must be paid, was an unprofitable business undertaking. Under such circumstances it is not strange that American writers, in the half-century following Poe, neglected the novel for shorter sketches or stories, which the increasing number of magazines rendered salable. Hack work much of it may have been, but nevertheless work which accustomed the American reading public to the shorter narrative form and trained the writers in technique.

Since the time of Poe and Hawthorne, the short story has developed so rapidly that a brief history of its later days can do little more than catalogue names and indicate broad tendencies. After Poe there came a period in America when literature seemed unlikely to fulfill his brilliant promise. In this barren

mid-century a few names stand out: Edward Everett Hale, whose story, *The Man Without a Country*, is still read, Fitz-James O'Brien, with his tales of the supernatural, and Bret Harte, whose stories of the Forty-Niners created a sensation. The most influential of these was Bret Harte, whose stories of the romantic West of the gold rush period were followed in the eighties by a flood of local color stories. Until after the close of the century this type of story continued in popularity. George W. Cable, Thomas Nelson Page, James Lane Allen, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Alice Brown, Hamlin Garland — each one of these is inseparably connected with the locality which he chose to interpret. Although local color stories have somewhat declined in popularity here of late, they are not by any means a discarded form. When Konrad Bercovici's stories of the Rumanian gypsies can win such an audience as they do, or when a story like Mrs. Gilchrist Wood's *Turkey Red* is within a few years included in numerous school readers, it is evident that the story of local color is still a popular form.

Now that we have traced the development of the short story to our own century, it is but natural for the American student to ask, "What about the short story in America to-day?" For years we Americans have looked upon the short story as our peculiar field — our discovery, some critics would say. Several influences have tended to make us thus appropriate it. American life has become increasingly complex, its conditions increasingly variable. With mechanical devices developed beyond human expectation, we find it possible to pass as if by magic from New York's East Side to the broad stretches of the western prairies, from a quiet mountain village of New England to the soft, foreign speech and gay life of New Orleans. What interests New York to-day may not interest it to-morrow. Matters vital to a sleepy little plantation town in Georgia are of no moment to the steel workers of Gary, Indiana. With the vastness and variety of our country and the heterogeneous population which makes us the "melting pot," a variety of interpretation is demanded. This we have had in the short story, an interpretation of America to itself and the world, bit by bit, detail by detail, like the parts of a great stained glass window. No novelist may ever be able to write a novel which will truly represent America, but all the short-story writers, perfecting

each his own bit, may yet produce a literature which in the aggregate will be America itself.

The short story has, however, suffered from overpopularity. Thousands of short stories are published every year. Short-story courses have been established in most of our high schools and colleges; correspondence schools have arisen which claim to train directly for publication. The craft of the short story is very generally understood. So thoroughly have the laws of structure been mastered that never before have we had so many technically excellent short stories; and yet never before have we had so many stories of transitory worth. The theory of the single impression has been developed until we seem to look upon the short story as a sort of literary kodak with which to take snapshots along the way. The great stories of the world, whether before or after the perfection of short story technique, have been built upon universal truth. Too many of our modern stories express perfectly what is too trivial or too limited to be worth expressing. When technique becomes too self-conscious, it is likely to lose sight of permanent values.

Two interests seem at present to threaten the ascendancy of the short story in American literature, the rising popularity of the drama, especially of the one-act play, and the high commercial reward which scenario writing offers the author. In the opinion of the editor, these are beneficient rather than threatening influences. Even after interest ceases to be concentrated upon the short story, writers in whom is the divine gift of inspiration will continue to seek expression through that form. No matter how popular the one-act play may become, there will always be writers with something to say which can best be said through the short story. Perhaps the stage and screen with their superior means of pictorial presentation will set the short story free for greater emphasis upon thought and content. The choice of form will be determined by fitness rather than by popularity. Who knows but that the next quarter-century will see in the short story not only a just application of the laws of technique already won, but less straining for effect, less conscious art, less attention to trivial or fleeting emotions, less scrambling for what is bizarre and even unnatural, and more sincerity in the interpretation of life?

SHORT STORIES OF TO-DAY

THE BEDQUILT

By DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

Of all the Elwell family Aunt Mehetabel was certainly the most unimportant member. It was in the New England days, when an unmarried woman was an old maid at twenty, at forty was every one's servant, and at sixty had gone through so much discipline that she could need no more in the next world. Aunt Mehetabel was sixty-eight.

She had never for a moment known the pleasure of being important to any one. Not that she was useless in her brother's family; she was expected, as a matter of course, to take upon herself the most tedious and uninteresting part of the household labors. On Mondays she accepted as her share the washing of the men's shirts, heavy with sweat and stiff with dirt from the fields and from their own hard-working bodies. Tuesdays she never dreamed of being allowed to iron anything pretty or even interesting, like the baby's white dresses or the fancy aprons of her young lady nieces. She stood all day pressing out a tiresome monotonous succession of dish-cloths and towels and sheets.

In preserving-time she was allowed to have none of the pleasant responsibility of deciding when the fruit had cooked long enough, nor did she share in the little excitement of pouring the sweet-smelling stuff into the stone jars. She sat in a corner with the children and stoned cherries incessantly, or hulled strawberries until her fingers were dyed red to the bone.

The Elwells were not consciously unkind to their aunt, they were even in a vague way fond of her; but she was so

utterly insignificant a figure in their lives that they bestowed no thought whatever on her. Aunt Mehetabel did not resent this treatment; she took it quite as unconsciously as they gave it. It was to be expected when one was an old-maid dependent in a busy family. She gathered what crumbs of comfort she could from their occasional careless kindnesses and tried to hide the hurt which even yet pierced her at her brother's rough joking. In the winter when they all sat before the big hearth, roasted apples, drank mulled cider, and teased the girls about their beaux and the boys about their sweethearts, she shrank into a dusky corner with her knitting, happy if the evening passed without her brother saying, with a crude sarcasm, "Ask your Aunt Mehetabel about the beaux that used to come a-sparkin' her!" or, "Mehetabel, how was't when you was in love with Abel Cummings?" As a matter of fact, she had been the same at twenty as at sixty, a quiet, mouse-like little creature, too timid and shy for any one to notice, or to raise her eyes for a moment and wish for a life of her own.

Her sister-in-law, a big hearty housewife, who ruled indoors with as autocratic a sway as did her husband on the farm, was rather kind in an absent, offhand way to the shrunken little old woman, and it was through her that Mehetabel was able to enjoy the one pleasure of her life. Even as a girl she had been clever with her needle in the way of patching bedquilts. More than that she could never learn to do. The garments which she made for herself were the most lamentable affairs, and she was humbly grateful for any help in the bewildering business of putting them together. But in patchwork she enjoyed a tepid importance. She could really do that as well as any one else. During years of devotion to this one art she had accumulated a considerable store of quilting patterns. Sometimes the neighbors would send over and ask "Miss Mehetabel" for such and such a design. It was with an agreeable flutter at being able to help some one that she went to the dresser,

in her bare little room under the eaves, and extracted from her crowded portfolio the pattern desired.

She never knew how her great idea came to her. Sometimes she thought she must have dreamed it, sometimes she even wondered reverently, in the phraseology of the weekly prayer-meeting, if it had not been "sent" to her. She never admitted to herself that she could have thought of it without other help; it was too great, too ambitious, too lofty a project for her humble mind to have conceived. Even when she finished drawing the design with her own fingers, she gazed at it incredulously, not daring to believe that it could indeed be her handiwork. At first it seemed to her only like a lovely but quite unreal dream. She did not think of putting it into execution — so elaborate, so complicated, so beautifully difficult a pattern could be only for the angels in heaven to quilt. But so curiously does familiarity accustom us even to very wonderful things, that as she lived with this astonishing creation of her mind, the longing grew stronger and stronger to give it material life with her nimble old fingers.

She gasped at her daring when this idea first swept over her and put it away as one does a sinfully selfish notion, but she kept coming back to it again and again. Finally she said compromisingly to herself that she would make one "square," just one part of her design, to see how it would look. Accustomed to the most complete dependence on her brother and his wife, she dared not do even this without asking Sophia's permission. With a heart full of hope and fear thumping furiously against her old ribs, she approached the mistress of the house on churning-day, knowing with the innocent guile of a child that the country woman was apt to be in a good temper while working over the fragrant butter in the cool cellar.

Sophia listened absently to her sister-in-law's halting, hesitating petition. "Why, yes, Mehetabel," she said, leaning far down into the huge churn for the last golden morsels — "why, yes, start another quilt if you want to.

I've got a lot of pieces from the spring sewing that will work in real good." Mehetabel tried honestly to make her see that this would be no common quilt, but her limited vocabulary and her emotion stood between her and expression. At last Sophia said, with a kindly impatience: "Oh, there! Don't bother me. I never could keep track of your quiltin' patterns, anyhow. I don't care what pattern you go by."

With this overwhelmingly, although unconsciously, generous permission Mehetabel rushed back up the steep attic stairs to her room, and in a joyful agitation began preparations for the work of her life. It was even better than she hoped. By some heaven-sent inspiration she had invented a pattern beyond which no patchwork quilt could go.

She had but little time from her incessant round of household drudgery for this new and absorbing occupation, and she did not dare sit up late at night lest she burn too much candle. It was weeks before the little square began to take on a finished look, to show the pattern. Then Mehetabel was in a fever of impatience to bring it to completion. She was too conscientious to shirk even the smallest part of her share of the work of the house, but she rushed through it with a speed which left her panting as she climbed to the little room. This seemed like a radiant spot to her as she bent over the innumerable scraps of cloth which already in her imagination ranged themselves in the infinitely diverse pattern of her masterpiece. Finally she could wait no longer, and one evening ventured to bring her work down beside the fire where the family sat, hoping that some good fortune would give her a place near the tallow candles on the mantelpiece. She was on the last corner of the square, and her needle flew in and out with inconceivable rapidity. No one noticed her, a fact which filled her with relief, and by bedtime she had but a few more stitches to add.

As she stood up with the others, the square fluttered

out of her trembling old hands and fell on the table. Sophia glanced at it carelessly. "Is that the new quilt you're beginning on?" she asked with a yawn. "It looks like a real pretty pattern. Let's see it." Up to that moment Mehetabel had labored in the purest spirit of disinterested devotion to an ideal, but as Sophia held her work toward the candle to examine it, and exclaimed in amazement and admiration, she felt an astonished joy to know that her creation would stand the test of publicity.

"Land sakes!" ejaculated her sister-in-law, looking at the many-colored square. "Why, Mehetabel Elwell, where'd you git that pattern?"

"I made it up," said Mehetabel quietly, but with unutterable pride.

"No!" exclaimed Sophia incredulously. "*Did* you! Why, I never see such a pattern in my life. Girls, come here and see what your Aunt Mehetabel is doing."

The three tall daughters turned back reluctantly from the stairs. "I don't seem to take much interest in patchwork," said one listlessly.

"No, nor I neither!" answered Sophia; "but a stone image would take an interest in this pattern. Honest, Mehetabel, did you think of it yourself? And how under the sun and stars did you ever git your courage up to start in a-making it? Land! Look at all those tiny squinchy little seams! Why, the wrong side ain't a thing *but* seams!"

The girls echoed their mother's exclamations, and Mr. Elwell himself came over to see what they were discussing. "Well, I declare!" he said, looking at his sister with eyes more approving than she could ever remember. "That beats old Mis' Wightman's quilt that got the blue ribbon so many times at the county fair."

Mehetabel's heart swelled within her, and tears of joy moistened her old eyes as she lay that night in her narrow, hard bed, too proud and excited to sleep. The next day her sister-in-law amazed her by taking the huge pan of potatoes out of her lap and setting one of the younger chil-

dren to peeling them. "Don't you want to go on with that quiltin' pattern?" she said; "I'd kind o' like to see how you're goin' to make the grape-vine design come out on the corner."

By the end of the summer the family interest had risen so high that Mehetabel was given a little stand in the sitting-room where she could keep her pieces, and work in odd minutes. She almost wept over such kindness, and resolved firmly not to take advantage of it by neglecting her work, which she performed with a fierce thoroughness. But the whole atmosphere of her world was changed. Things had a meaning now. Through the longest task of washing milk-pans there rose the rainbow of promise of her variegated work. She took her place by the little table and put the thimble on her knotted, hard finger with the solemnity of a priestess performing a sacred rite.

She was even able to bear with some degree of dignity the extreme honor of having the minister and the minister's wife comment admiringly on her great project. The family felt quite proud of Aunt Mehetabel as Minister Bowman had said it was work as fine as any he had ever seen, "and he didn't know but finer!" The remark was repeated verbatim to the neighbors in the following weeks when they dropped in and examined in a perverse silence some astonishingly difficult *tour de force* which Mehetabel had just finished.

The family especially plumed themselves on the slow progress of the quilt. "Mehetabel has been to work on that corner for six weeks, come Tuesday, and she ain't half done yet,' they explained to visitors. They fell out of the way of always expecting her to be the one to run on errands even for the children. "Don't bother your Aunt Mehetabel," Sophia would call. "Can't you see she's got to a ticklish place on the quilt?"

The old woman sat up straighter and looked the world in the face. She was a part of it at last. She joined in the conversation and her remarks were listened to. The chil-

dren were even told to mind her when she asked them to do some service for her, although this she did but seldom, the habit of self-effacement being too strong.

One day some strangers from the next town drove up and asked if they could inspect the wonderful quilt which they had heard of, even down in their end of the valley. After that such visitations were not uncommon, making the Elwells' house a notable object. Mehetabel's quilt came to be one of the town sights, and no one was allowed to leave the town without having paid tribute to its worth. The Elwells saw to it that their aunt was better dressed than she had ever been before, and one of the girls made her a pretty little cap to wear on her thin white hair.

A year went by and a quarter of the quilt was finished; a second year passed and half was done. The third year Mehetabel had pneumonia and lay ill for weeks and weeks overcome with terror lest she die before her work was completed. A fourth year and one could really see the grandeur of the whole design; and in September of the fifth year, the entire family watching her with eager and admiring eyes, Mehetabel quilted the last stitches in her creation. The girls held it up by the four corners, and they all looked at it in a solemn silence. Then Mr. Elwell smote one horny hand within the other and exclaimed: "By ginger! That's goin' to the county fair!" Mehetabel blushed a deep red at this. It was a thought which had occurred to her in a bold moment, but she had not dared to entertain it. The family acclaimed the idea, and one of the boys was forthwith dispatched to the house of the neighbor who was chairman of the committee for their village. He returned with radiant face. "Of course he'll take it. Like's not it may git a prize, so he says; but he's got to have it right off, because all the things are goin' to-morrow morning."

Even in her swelling pride Mehetabel felt a pang of separation as the bulky package was carried out of the house. As the days went on she felt absolutely lost without her work. For years it had been her one preoccupation, and

she could not bear even to look at the little stand, now quite bare of the litter of scraps which had lain on it so long. One of the neighbors who took the long journey to the fair, reported that the quilt was hung in a place of honor in a glass case in "Agricultural Hall." But that meant little to Mehetabel's utter ignorance of all that lay outside of her brother's home. The family noticed the old woman's depression, and one day Sophia said kindly, "You feel sort o' lost without the quilt, don't you, Mehetabel?"

"They took it away so quick!" she said wistfully; "I hadn't hardly had one real good look at it myself."

Mr. Elwell made no comment, but a day or two later he asked his sister how early she could get up in the morning.

"I dun'no'. Why?" she asked.

"Well, Thomas Ralston has got to drive clear to West Oldton to see a lawyer there, and that is four miles beyond the fair. He says if you can git up so's to leave here at four in the morning he'll drive you over to the fair, leave you there for the day, and bring you back again at night.'

Mehetabel looked at him with incredulity. It was as though some one had offered her a ride in a golden chariot up to the gates of heaven. "Why, you can't *mean* it!" she cried, paling with the intensity of her emotion. Her brother laughed a little uneasily. Even to his careless indifference this joy was a revelation of the narrowness of her life in his home. "Oh, 'tain't so much to go to the fair. Yes, I mean it. Go git your things ready, for he wants to start to-morrow morning."

All that night a trembling, excited old woman lay and stared at the rafters. She, who had never been more than six miles from home in her life, was going to drive thirty miles away — it was like going to another world. She who had never seen anything more exciting than a church supper was to see the county fair. To Mehetabel it was like making the tour of the world. She had never dreamed of doing it. She could not at all imagine what it would be like.

Nor did the exhortations of the family, as they bade good-by to her, throw any light on her confusion. They had all been at least once to the scene of gayety she was to visit, and as she tried to eat her breakfast they called out conflicting advice to her till her head whirled. Sophia told her to be sure and see the display of preserves. Her brother said not to miss inspecting the stock, her nieces said the fancy-work was the only thing worth looking at, and her nephews said she must bring them home an account of the races. The buggy drove up to the door, she was helped in, and her wraps tucked about her. They all stood together and waved good-by to her as she drove out of the yard. She waved back, but she scarcely saw them. On her return home that evening she was very pale, and so tired and stiff that her brother had to lift her out bodily, but her lips were set in a blissful smile. They crowded around her with thronging questions, until Sophia pushed them all aside, telling them Aunt Mehetabel was too tired to speak until she had had her supper. This was eaten in an enforced silence on the part of the children, and then the old woman was helped into an easy-chair before the fire. They gathered about her, eager for news of the great world, and Sophia said, "Now, come, Mehetabel, tell us all about it!"

Mehetabel drew a long breath. "It was just perfect!" she said; "finer even than I thought. They've got it hanging up in the very middle of a sort o' closet made of glass, and one of the lower corners is ripped and turned back so's to show the seams on the wrong side."

"What?" asked Sophia, a little blankly.

"Why, the quilt!" said Mehetabel in surprise. "There are a whole lot of other ones in that room, but not one that can hold a candle to it, if I do say it who shouldn't. I heard lots of people say the same thing. You ought to have heard what the women said about that corner, Sophia. They said — well, I'd be ashamed to *tell* you what they said. I declare if I wouldn't!"

Mr. Elwell asked, "What did you think of that big ox we've heard so much about?"

"I didn't look at the stock," returned his sister indifferently. "That set of pieces you gave me, Maria, from your red waist, come out just lovely!" she assured one of her nieces. "I heard one woman say you could 'most smell the red silk roses."

"Did any of the horses in our town race?" asked young Thomas.

"I didn't see the races."

"How about the preserves?" asked Sophia.

"I didn't see the preserves," said Mehetabel calmly. "You see, I went right to the room where the quilt was, and then I didn't want to leave it. It had been so long since I'd seen it. I had to look at it first real good myself, and then I looked at the others to see if there was any that could come up to it. And then the people begun comin' in and I got so interested in hearin' what they had to say I couldn't think of goin' anywheres else. I ate my lunch right there too, and I'm as glad as can be I did, too; for what do you think?" — she gazed about her with kindling eyes — "while I stood there with a sandwich in one hand didn't the head of the hull concern come in and open the glass door and pin 'First Prize' right in the middle of the quilt!"

There was a stir of congratulation and proud exclamation. Then Sophia returned again to the attack. "Didn't you go to see anything else?" she queried.

"Why, no," said Mehetabel. "Only the quilt. Why should I?"

She fell into a reverie where she saw again the glorious creation of her hand and brain hanging before all the world with the mark of highest approval on it. She longed to make her listeners see the splendid vision with her. She struggled for words; she reached blindly after unknown superlatives. "I tell you it looked like ——" she said, and paused, hesitating. Vague recollections of hymn-

book phraseology came into her mind, the only form of literary expression she knew; but they were dismissed as being sacrilegious, and also not sufficiently forcible. Finally, "I tell you it looked real *well!*" she assured them, and sat staring into the fire, on her tired old face the supreme content of an artist who has realized his ideal.

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

Dorothy Canfield Fisher cannot be introduced by a few words of biography. She is a woman of achievement in too many lines. Born in Kansas in 1879, while her father was president of the University of Kansas, she began life with a splendid heritage. Twenty years later she was graduated from Ohio State University with the degree of A.B. and continued her graduate studies at Columbia University, where her father had accepted a position as head librarian. In 1904 Dorothy Canfield received the doctor's degree from Columbia in the department of modern languages. Traveling abroad, continuing her work in the languages, writing a textbook on Rhetoric, serving as secretary in the Horace Mann School, and above all sharing the life of those about her, she spent the next three years until her marriage in 1907. Her husband, John Redwood Fisher, was a former football captain at Columbia. Shortly after their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher, preferring the simplicity of village life to the exactions of the city, went to live in Arlington, Vermont. From 1914 to 1919 Mrs. Fisher was engaged in various activities in France, contributing as war worker and writer more than seemed possible for one woman. Two collections of sketches and short stories, *Home Fires in France* and *The Day of Glory*, resulted from her experiences during these strenuous years. Mrs. Fisher, speaking of her fondness for imaginary stories, says, "The stories I told myself were infinitely superior to anything I ever got down on paper." One finds this hard to believe. As a novelist, Mrs. Fisher is at her best in *The Bent Twig*, a story of college life in the Middle West. No boy or girl can afford to miss reading this.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Remember that this story belongs to "the New England days." Do not interpret Aunt Mehetabel's story in

terms of high-powered cars and pleasure-loving grandmothers. Was she conscious of the pathos of her position in the family? What was the attitude of the other members of the family toward her?

2. In the second and third paragraphs, note how the author gives specific instances to illustrate her first sentence: "She had never for a moment known the pleasure of being important to any one." Does this method give you a picture of Aunt Mehetabel's daily life?
3. Tell the story of how she gradually gains importance in the family. Point out sentences in which the author gives us a glimpse into Mehetabel's inner thoughts. Note how short and full of significance many of these sentences are: for example, "Things had a meaning now."
4. Why could not Mehetabel tell of her experiences at the fair? Explain the sentence: "She struggled for words; she reached blindly after unknown superlatives." Note the significant concluding sentence of the story.
5. With this story as a model, develop in a theme the following situation: A boy enters a new school. Hitherto he has never been good at school work and has become accustomed to thinking of himself as a ne'er-do-well. His new teacher finds him drawing clever pictures in his Arithmetic and asks him to illustrate a booklet which the class is making.
6. After studying this story, read *The Revolt of Mother*, by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and *A Day's Pleasure*, by Hamlin Garland. Note how both stories picture the monotony and lack of beauty in the lives of women of the farming class. How are modern inventions — radio, telephone, automobile — changing these conditions?

Stories with a New England setting:
A Day Off — Alice Brown
The Revolt of Mother — Mary E. Wilkins Freeman
Joint Owners in Spain — Alice Brown
The Gala Dress — Mary E. Wilkins Freeman

Volumes of short stories by Dorothy Canfield:
Hillsboro People *Home Fires in France*
The Real Motive *Raw Material*
The Day of Glory

"CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN"

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

Mr. and Mrs. Baxter, having walked a hot half-mile from church, drooped thankfully into wicker chairs upon their front porch, though their ten-year-old daughter, Jane, who had accompanied them, immediately darted away, swinging her hat by its ribbon and skipping as lithesomely as if she had just come forth upon a cool morning.

"I don't know how she does it!" her father moaned, glancing after her and drying his forehead temporarily upon a handkerchief. "That would merely kill me dead, after walking in this heat."

Then, for a time, the two were content to sit in silence, nodding to occasional acquaintances who passed in the desultory after-church procession. Mr. Baxter fanned himself with sporadic little bursts of energy which made his straw hat creak, and Mrs. Baxter sighed with the heat, and gently rocked her chair.

But, as a group of five young people passed along the other side of the street, Mr. Baxter abruptly stopped fanning himself, and, following the direction of his gaze, Mrs. Baxter ceased to rock. In half-completed attitudes they leaned slightly forward, sharing one of those pauses of parents who unexpectedly behold their offspring.

The offspring, in this case, was their son, William.

"My soul!" said William's father. "Hasn't that girl gone home *yet?*"

"He looks pale to me," Mrs. Baxter murmured absently. "I don't think he seems at all well, lately."

During the seventeen years since the arrival of William, their first born, Mr. Baxter had gradually learned not to protest anxieties of this kind, unless he desired to argue with no prospect of ever getting a decision.

"Hasn't she got any *home?*" he demanded testily.

"Isn't she ever going to quit visiting the Parchers and let people have a little peace?"

Mrs. Baxter disregarded this outburst as he had disregarded her remark about William's pallor. "You mean Miss Pratt?" she inquired dreamily, her eyes following the progress of her son. "No, he really doesn't look well at all."

"Is she going to visit the Parchers all summer?" Mr. Baxter insisted.

"She already has, almost," said Mrs. Baxter.

"Look at that boy!" the father grumbled. "Mooning along with those other moon-calves — can't even let her go to church alone! I wonder how many weeks of time, counting it out in hours, he's wasted that way this summer?"

"Oh, I don't know! You see, he never goes there in the evening now."

"What of that? He's there all day, isn't he? What do they find to talk about? That's the mystery to me! Day after day, hours after hours —— My soul! What do they *say?*"

Mrs. Baxter laughed indulgently. "People are always wondering that about the other ages. Poor Willie! I think that a great deal of the time their conversation would be probably about as general as it is now. You see Willie and Joe Bullitt are walking one on each side of Miss Pratt, and Johnnie Watson has to walk behind with May Parcher. Joe and Johnnie are there about as much as Willie is, and of course it's often his turn to be nice to May Parcher. He hasn't many chances to be tête-à-tête with Miss Pratt."

"Well, she ought to go home. I want that boy to get back into his senses. He's awful!"

"I think she is going soon," said Mrs. Baxter. "The Parchers are to have a dance for her Friday night, and I understand there's a floor to be laid in the yard and great things. It's a farewell party."

"That's one mercy, anyhow!"

"And if you wonder what they say," she resumed, "why, probably they're all talking about the party. And when Willie *is* alone with her — well, what does anybody say?" Mrs. Baxter interrupted herself to laugh. "Jane, for instance — she's always fascinated by that darkey, Genesis, when he's at work here in the yard, and they have long, long talks; I've seen them from the window. What on earth do you suppose they talk about? That's where Jane is now. She knew I told Genesis I'd give him something if he'd come and freeze the ice-cream for us to-day, and when we got here she heard the freezer and hopped right around there. If you went out to the back porch you'd find them talking steadily — but what on earth about I couldn't guess to save my life!"

And yet nothing could have been simpler: as a matter of fact, Jane and Genesis were talking about society. That is to say, their discourse was not sociologic; rather it was of the frivolous and elegant. Watteau prevailed with them over John Stuart Mill — in a word, they spoke of the beau monde.

Genesis turned the handle of the freezer with his left hand, allowing his right the freedom of gesture which was an intermittent necessity when he talked. In the matter of dress, Genesis had always been among the most informal of his race, but to-day there was a change almost unnerving to the Caucasian eye. He wore a balloonish suit of purple, strangely scalloped at pocket and cuff, and more strangely decorated with lines of small parasite buttons, in color blue, obviously buttons of leisure. His bulbous new shoes flashed back yellow fire at the embarrassed sun, and his collar (for he had gone so far) sent forth other sparkles, playing upon a polished surface over an inner graining of soot. Beneath it hung a simple, white, soiled evening tie, draped in a manner unintended by its manufacturer, and heavily overburdened by a green glass medallion of the Emperor Tiberius, set in brass.

"Yes'm," said Genesis. "Now I'm in 'at Swim — flyin' roun' ev'y even' wif all lem blue-vein people — I say, 'Mus' go buy me some blue-vein clo'es! Ef I'm go'n a *start*, might's well start *high!*' So firs', I buy me thishere gol' necktie pin wi' thishere lady's face carved out o' green di'mon, sittin' in the middle all 'at gol'. 'Nen I buy me pair Royal King shoes. I got a frien' o' mine, thishere Blooie Bowers; he say Royal King shoes same kine o' shoes *he* wear, an' I walk straight in 'at sto' where they keep 'em at. 'Don' was'e my time showin' me no ole-time shoes,' I say. 'Run out some them big, yella, lump-toed Royal Kings befo' my eyes, an' firs' pair fit me I pay price, an' wear em' right off on me!' 'Nen I got me thishere suit o' clo'es — *oh*, oh! Sign on 'em in window: 'Ef you wish to be bes'-dress' man in town take me home fer six dolluhs ninety-sevum cents.' ''At's kine o' suit Genesis need,' I say. 'Ef Genesis go'n a start dressin' high, might's well start top!'"

Jane nodded gravely, comprehending the reasonableness of this view. "What made you decide to start, Genesis?" she asked earnestly. "I mean, how did it happen you began to get this way?"

"Well, suh, 't all come 'bout right like kine o' slidin' into it 'stid o' hoppin' an' jumpin'. I'z spen' the even' at 'at lady's house, Fanny, what cook nex' do', las' year. Well, suh, 'at lady Fanny, she quit privut cookin', she kaytliss ——"

"She's what?" Jane asked. "What's that mean, Genesis — kaytliss?"

"She kaytuhs," he exclaimed. "Ef it's a man you call him kaytuh; ef it's a lady she's a kaytliss. She does kaytun fer all lem blue-vein fam'lies in town. She make refeshmuns, bring waituhs — 'at's kaytun. You maw give big dinnuh, she have Fanny kaytuh, an' don't take no trouble 'tall herself. Fanny take all 'at trouble."

"I see," said Jane. "But I don't see how her bein' a kaytliss started you to dressin' so high, Genesis."

"Thishere way. Fanny say, 'Look here, Genesis, I got big job t'morra night an' I'm man short, 'count o' havin' to have a 'nouncer.'"

"A what?"

"Fanny talk jes' that way. Goin' be big dinnuh potty, an' thishere blue-vein fam'ly tell Fanny they want whole lot of extry sploogin'; tell her put fine lookin cullud man stan' by drawin'-room do' — ask ev'ybody name an' holler out whatever name they say, jes' as they walk in. Thishere fam'ly say they goin' show what's what, 'nis town, an' they boun' Fanny go git 'em a 'nouncer. 'Well, what's mattuh *you* doin' 'at 'nouncin'?' Fanny say. 'Who — me?' I tell her. 'Yes, you kin too!' she say, an' she say len' me 'at waituh suit yoosta b'long ole Henry Gimlet what die' when he owin' Fanny sixteen dolluhs — an' Fanny tuck an' keep 'at waituh suit. She use 'at suit on extry waituhs when she got some on her hands what ain' got no waituh suit. 'You wear 'at suit,' Fanny say, 'an' you be good 'nouncer, 'cause you' a fine, big man, an' got a big gran' voice; nen you learn befo' long be a waituh, Genesis, 'an git dolluh an' half ev'y even' you waitin', 'sides all 'at money you make cuttin' grass daytime.' Well, suh, I'z stan' up doin' 'at 'nouncin' ve'y nex' night. White lady an' ge'lmun walk todes my do', I step up to 'em — I step up to 'em thisaway." Here Genesis found it pleasant to present the scene with some elaboration. He dropped the handle of the freezer, rose, assumed a stately but ingratiating expression and "stepped up" to the imagined couple, using a pacing and rhythmic gait — a conservative prance, which plainly indicated the simultaneous operation of an orchestra. Then bending graciously, as though the persons addressed were of dwarfish stature, "'Scuse me," he said, "but kin I please be so p'lite as to 'quiah you' name?" For a moment he listened attentively, then nodded, and, returning with the same aristocratic undulations to an imaginary doorway near the freezer, "Misto an' Missuz Orlosko Rinktum!" he proclaimed sonorously.

"*Who?*" cried Jane, fascinated. "Genesis, 'nounce that again, right away!"

Genesis heartily complied.

"Misto an' Missuz Orlosko Rinktum!" he bawled.

"Was that really their names?" she asked eagerly.

"Well, I kine o' fergit," Genesis admitted, resuming his work with the freezer. "Seem like I rickalect *somebody* got name good deal like what I say, 'cause some mighty blue-vein names at 'at dinnuh-potty, yes-suh! But I on'y git to be 'nouncer one time, 'cause Fanny tellin' me nex' fam'ly have dinnuh-potty make heap o' fun. Say I done my 'nouncin' good as kin be, but say what's use holler'n names jes' fer some the neighbors or they own aunts an' uncles to walk in, when ev'rybody awready knows 'em? So Fanny pummote me to waituh, an' I roun' right in amongs' big doin's mos' ev'y night. Pass ice-cream, lemonade, lemon-ice, cake, sammitches. 'Lemme han' you lil mo' chicken-salad, ma'am' — ''Low me be so kine as to git you f'esh cup coffee, suh' — 's way ole Genesis talkin' ev'y even' 'ese days!"

Jane looked at him thoughtfully. "Do you like it better than cuttin' grass, Genesis?" she asked.

He paused to consider.

"Yes'm — when ban' play all lem *tunes!* My goo'ness, do soun' gran'!"

"You can't do it to-night, though, Genesis," said Jane. "You haf to be quiet on Sunday nights, don't you?"

"Yes'm. Ain' got no mo' kaytun till nex' Friday even'."

"Oh, I bet that's the party for Miss Pratt at Mr. Parcher's!" cried Jane. "Didn't I guess right?"

"Yes'm. I reckon I'm a go'n a see one you' fam'ly 'at night; see him dancin' — wait on him at refeshmuns."

Jane's expression became even more serious than usual. "Willie? I don't know whether he's goin', Genesis."

"Lan' name!" Genesis exclaimed. "He die ef he don' git *in*vite to 'at ball!"

"Oh, he's invited," said Jane. "Only I think maybe he won't go."

"My goo'ness! Why ain't he goin'?"

Jane looked at her friend studiously before replying. "Well, it's a secret," she said, finally, "but it's a very inter'sting one, an' I'll tell you if you never tell."

"Yes'm; I ain't tellin' nobody."

Jane glanced round, then stepped a little closer and told the secret with the solemnity it deserved. "Well, when Miss Pratt first came to visit Miss May Parcher, Willie used to keep papa's evening clo'es in his window-seat, an' mamma wondered what *had* become of 'em. Then, after dinner, he'd slip up there an' put 'em on him, an' go out through the kitchen an' call on Miss Pratt. Then mamma found 'em, and she thought he oughtn't to do that, so she didn't tell him or anything an' she didn't even tell papa, but she had the tailor make 'em ever an' ever so much bigger, 'cause they were gettin' too tight for papa. An', well, so after that, even if Willie could get 'em out o' mamma's clo'es closet where she keeps 'em now, he'd look so funny in 'em he couldn't wear 'em. Well, an' then he's never been to see Miss Pratt in the evening one single time since then because mamma says after he started to go there in that suit he couldn't go without it, or maybe Miss Pratt or the other ones that's in love of her would think it was pretty queer, and maybe kind of expeck it was papa's all the time. Mamma says she thinks Willie must have worried a good deal over reasons to say why he'd always go in the daytime after that, an' never came in the evening, an' now they're goin' to have this party, an' she says he's been gettin' paler an' paler every day since he heard about it. Mamma says he's pale *some*, because Miss Pratt's goin' away, but she thinks it's a good deal more because, well, if he would wear those evening clo'es just to go callin', how would it be to go to that party an' not have any? That's what mamma thinks — an', Genesis, you promised you'd never tell as long as you lived!"

"Yes'm. I ain' tellin'," Genesis chuckled. "I'm a go'n a git me one nem waituh suits befo' long, myse'f, so's I kin quit wearin' 'at ole Henry Gimlet suit what b'longs to Fanny, an' have me a privut suit o' my own. They's a secon' han' sto', ovuh on the avynoo, where they got swaller-tail suits all way f'um sevum dolluhs to nineteen dolluhs an' ninety-eight cents. I'm a ——"

Jane started, interrupting him. "*Sh*," she whispered, laying a finger warningly upon her lips. William had entered the yard at the back gate, and, approaching over the lawn, had arrived at the steps of the porch before Jane perceived him. She gave him an apprehensive look, but he passed into the house absent-mindedly, not even glancing at Clematis, the humble and faithful dog in attendance upon Genesis — and that was remarkable, because the sight of Clematis was nearly always but too obviously painful to William. Clematis was so mingled a dog that he shook one's faith in any definiteness of design on the part of Nature: it hurt William to see him about the premises, and William showed his feelings, for he feared that people might think Clematis belonged to him or to his family. But to-day he passed without flinching — and Mrs. Baxter was right: William did look pale.

"I guess he didn't hear us," said Jane, when he had disappeared into the interior. "He acks awful funny!" she added thoughtfully. "First when he was in love with Miss Pratt, he'd be mad about somep'm' almost every minute he was home. Couldn't anybody say *any*thing to him but he'd just behave as if it was awful, an' then if you'd see him out walkin' with Miss Pratt, well, he'd look like — like ——" Jane paused; her eye fell upon Clematis and by a happy inspiration she was able to complete her simile with remarkable accuracy. "He'd look like the way Clematis looks at people! That's just *exackly* the way he'd look, Genesis, when he was walkin' with Miss Pratt; an' then when he was home he got so quiet he couldn't answer questions an' wouldn't hear what anybody said

to him at table or anywhere, an' papa'd just almost bust. Mamma 'n' papa'd talk an' talk about it, an'" — she lowered her voice — "an' I knew what they were talkin' about. Well, an' then he'd hardly ever get mad any more; he'd just sit in his room, an' sometimes he'd sit in there without any light, or he'd sit out in the yard all by himself all evening maybe, an' th' other evening after I was in bed I heard 'em, an' papa said — well, this is what papa told mamma." And again lowering her voice, she proffered the quotation from her father in a tone somewhat awe-struck. "Papa said, by Gosh! if he ever 'a' thought a son of his could make such a Word idiot of himself he almost wished we'd both been girls!"

Having completed this report in a violent whisper Jane nodded repeatedly, for emphasis, and Genesis shook his head to show that he was as deeply impressed as she wished him to be. "I guess," she added, after a pause, "I guess Willie didn't hear anything we talked about him, or clo'es, or anything."

She was mistaken in part. William had caught no reference to himself, but he had overheard something, and he was now alone in his room, thinking about it almost feverishly. "A secon' han' sto', ovuh on the avy-noo, where they got swaller-tail suits all way frum sevem dolluhs to nineteen dolluhs an' ninety-eight cents."

. . . Civilization is responsible for certain longings in the breast of man — artificial longings, but sometimes as poignant as hunger and thirst. Of these the strongest are those of the maid for the bridal veil, of the lad for long trousers, and of the youth for a tailed coat of state. To the gratification of this last, few of the more hushed joys in life are comparable. Indulged youths, too rich, can know, to the unctuous full, neither the longing nor the gratification; but one such as William, in "moderate circumstances," is privileged to pant for his first evening clothes as the hart panteth after the water-brook —

and sometimes, to pant in vain. Also, this was a crisis in William's life: in addition to his yearning for such apparel, he was racked by a passionate urgency.

As Jane had so precociously understood, unless he should somehow manage to obtain the proper draperies he could not go to the farewell dance for Miss Pratt. Other unequipped boys could go in their ordinary "best clothes," but William could not; for, alack! he had dressed too well too soon!

He was in desperate case. The sorrow of the approaching great departure was but the heavier because it had been so long deferred. To William it had seemed that this flower-strewn summer could actually end no more than he could actually die, but Time had begun its awful lecture, and even Seventeen was listening. Miss Pratt, that magic girl, was going home.

To the competent twenties, hundreds of miles suggesting no impossibilities, such departures may be rending but not tragic. Implacable, the difference to Seventeen! Miss Pratt was going home, and Seventeen could not follow; it could only mourn upon the lonely shore, tracing little angelic footprints left in the sand. To Seventeen such a departure is final; it is a vanishing.

And now it seemed possible that William might be deprived even of the last romantic consolations: of the "last waltz together," of the last, last "listening to music in the moonlight together"; of all those sacred lasts of the "last evening together." And this was a thought that turned him cold on the hot day: it was unbearable.

He had pleaded strongly for a "dress-suit" as a fitting recognition of his seventeenth birthday anniversary, but he had been denied by his father with a jocularity more crushing than rigor. Since then — in particular since the arrival of Miss Pratt — Mr. Baxter's temper had been growing steadily more and more even. That is, as affected by William's social activities, it was uniformly

bad. Nevertheless, after heavy brooding, William decided to make one final appeal before he resorted to measures which the necessities of despair had brought to his mind.

He wished to give himself every chance for a good effect; therefore he did not act hastily, but went over what he intended to say, rehearsing it with a few appropriate gestures, and even taking some pleasure in the pathetic dignity of this performance, as revealed by occasional glances at the mirror of his dressing-table. But in spite of these little alleviations, his trouble was great and all too real, for, unhappily, the previous rehearsal of an emotional scene does not prove the emotion insincere.

Descending, he found his father and mother still sitting upon the front porch. Then, standing before them, solemn-eyed, he uttered a preluding cough, and began:

"Father," he said, in a loud voice, "I have come to ——"

"Dear me!" Mrs. Baxter exclaimed, not perceiving that she was interrupting an intended oration. "Willie, you *do* look pale! Sit down, poor child; you oughtn't to walk so much in this heat."

"Father," William repeated. "Fath——"

"I suppose you got her safely home from church," Mr. Baxter said. "She might have been carried off by highwaymen if you three boys hadn't been along to take care of her!"

But William persisted heroically. "Father," he said. "Father, I have come to ——"

"What on earth's the matter with you?" Mr. Baxter ceased to fan himself, Mrs. Baxter stopped rocking, and both stared, for it had dawned upon them that something unusual was beginning to take place.

William backed to the start and tried it again. "Father, I have come to ——" He paused and gulped, evidently expecting to be interrupted, but both of his parents remained silent, regarding him with puzzled surprise. "Father," he began once more, "I have come — I have

come to — to place before you something I think it's your duty as my father to undertake, and I have thought over this step before laying it before you."

"My soul!" said Mr. Baxter under his breath. "My soul!"

"At my age," William continued, swallowing, and fixing his earnest eyes upon the roof of the porch to avoid the disconcerting stare of his father, "at my age there's some things that ought to be done and some things that ought not to be done. If you asked me what I thought *ought* to be done, there is only one answer: When anybody as old as I am has to go out among other young men his own age that already got one, like anyway half of them *have*, who I go with, and their fathers have already taken such a step, because they felt it was the only right thing to do, because at my age and the young men I go with's age it *is* the only right thing to do because that is something nobody could deny, at my age ——" Here William drew a long breath, and, deciding to abandon that sentence as irrevocably tangled, began another: "I have thought over this step, because there comes a time to every young man when they must lay a step before their father before something happens that they would be sorry for. I have thought this undertaking over, and I am certain it would be your honest duty ——"

"My soul!" gasped Mr. Baxter. "I thought I knew you pretty well, but you talk like a stranger to me! What *is* all this? What you *want?*"

"A dress-suit!" said William. He had intended to say a great deal more before coming to the point, but though through nervousness he had lost some threads of his rehearsed plea, it seemed to him he was getting along well, and putting his case with some distinction and power. He was surprised and hurt, therefore, to hear his father utter a wordless shout in a tone of wondering derision.

"I have more to say ——" William began.

But, disregarding this, Mr. Baxter cut him off. "A

dress-suit!" he cried. "Well, I'm glad you were talking about *something*, because I honestly thought it must be too much sun!"

At this, the troubled William brought his eyes down from the porch roof and forgot his rehearsal. He lifted his hand appealingly. "Father," he said, "I *got* to have one!"

"'Got to!'" Mr. Baxter laughed a laugh that chilled the supplicant through and through. "At your age I thought I was lucky if I had *any* suit that was fit to be seen in. You're too young, Willie. I don't want you to get your mind on such stuff, and if I have my way, you won't have a dress-suit for four years more, anyhow."

"Father, I *got* to have one. I got to have one right away!" The urgency in William's voice was almost tearful. "I don't ask you to have it made, or to go to expensive tailors, but there's a plenty of good ready-made ones that only cost about forty dollars; they're advertised in the paper. Father, wouldn't you spend just forty dollars? I'll pay it back when I'm in business. I'll work —— "

Mr. Baxter waved all this aside. "It's not the money. It's the principle that I'm standing for, and I don't intend ——"

"Father, *won't* you do it?"

"No, I will not!"

William saw that sentence had been passed and all appeals for a new trial denied. He choked, and rushed into the house without more ado.

"Poor boy!" his mother said.

"Poor boy nothing!" fumed Mr. Baxter. "He's almost lost his mind over that Miss Pratt. Think of his coming out here and starting a regular debating society declamation before his mother and father! Why, I never heard anything like it in my life! I don't like to hurt his feelings, and I'd give him anything I could afford that would do him any good, but all he wants it for now is to splurge

around in at this party before that little yellow-haired girl! I guess he can wear the kind of clothes most of the other boys wear — the kind *I* wore at parties — and never thought of wearing anything else. What's the world getting to be like? Seventeen years old and throws a fit because he can't have a dress-suit!"

Mrs. Baxter looked thoughtful. "But — but suppose he felt he couldn't go to the dance unless he wore one, poor boy ——"

"All the better," said Mr. Baxter firmly. "Do him good to keep away and get his mind on something else."

"Of course," she suggested, with some timidity, "forty dollars isn't a great deal of money, and a ready-made suit, just to begin with ——"

Naturally Mr. Baxter perceived whither she was drifting. "Forty dollars isn't a thousand," he interrupted, "but what you want to throw it away for? One reason a boy of seventeen oughtn't to have evening clothes is the way he behaves with *any* clothes. Forty dollars! Why, only this summer he sat down on Jane's open paint-box, twice in one week!"

"Well — Miss Pratt *is* going away, and the dance will be her last night. I'm afraid it would really hurt him to miss it. I remember once, before we were engaged — that evening before papa took me abroad, and you ——"

"It's no use, mamma," he said. "We were both over twenty — why, *I* was six years older than Willie, even then. There's no comparison at all. I'll let him order a dress-suit on his twenty-first birthday and not a minute before. I don't believe in it, and I intend to see that he gets all this stuff out of his system. He's got to learn some hard sense!"

Mrs. Baxter shook her head doubtfully, but she said no more. Perhaps she regretted a little that she had caused Mr. Baxter's evening clothes to be so expansively enlarged — for she looked rather regretful. She also looked rather incomprehensible, not to say cryptic, during the long

silence which followed, and Mr. Baxter resumed his rocking, unaware of the fixity of gaze which his wife maintained upon him — a thing the most loyal wives will do sometimes. The incomprehensible look disappeared before long, but the regretful one was renewed in the mother's eyes whenever she caught glimpses of her son, that day, and at the table, where William's manner was gentle — even toward his heartless father.

Underneath that gentleness, the harried self of William was no longer debating a desperate resolve, but had fixed upon it, and on the following afternoon Jane chanced to be a witness of some resultant actions. She came to her mother with an account of them.

"Mamma, what you s'pose Willie wants of those two ole market baskets that were down cellar?"

"Why, Jane?"

"Well, he carried 'em in his room, an' then he saw me lookin', an' he said 'G'way from here!' an' shut the door. He looks so funny! What's he want of those ole baskets, mamma?"

"I don't know. Perhaps he doesn't even know himself, Jane."

But William did know, definitely. He had set the baskets upon chairs, and now, with pale determination, he was proceeding to fill them. When his task was completed the two baskets contained, between them:

One heavy-weight winter suit of clothes.
One light-weight summer suit of clothes.
Two pairs of white flannel trousers.
Two Madras négligée shirts.
Two flannel shirts.
Two silk shirts.
Seven soft collars.
Three silk neckties.
One crocheted tie.
Eight pairs of socks.
One pair of patent-leather shoes.

One overcoat.

Some underwear.

One two-foot shelf of books, consisting of several sterling works upon mathematics, in a damaged condition; five of Shakespeare's plays, expurgated and edited for schools and colleges, and also damaged; a work upon political economy and another upon the science of physics; *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, *How to Enter a Drawing-Room and 500 Other Hints*, *Witty Sayings From Here and There*, *Lorna Doone*, *Quentin Durward*, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, a very old copy of *Moths*, and a small Bible.

William spread handkerchiefs upon the two overbulging cargoes, that their nature might not be disclosed to the curious, and, after listening a moment at his door, took the baskets, one upon each arm, then went quickly down the stairs and out of the house, out of the yard, and into the alley — by which route he had modestly chosen to travel.

. . . After an absence of about two hours, he returned empty-handed and anxious. "Mother, I want to speak to you," he said, addressing Mrs. Baxter in a voice which clearly proved the strain of these racking days. "I want to speak to you about something important."

"Yes, Willie?"

"Please send Jane away. I can't talk about important things with a child in the room."

Jane naturally wished to stay, since he was going to say something important. "Mamma, do I *haf* to go?"

"Just a few minutes, dear."

Jane walked submissively out of the door, leaving it open behind her. Then, having gone about six feet farther, she halted, and, preserving a breathless silence, consoled herself for her banishment by listening to what was said, hearing it all as satisfactorily as if she had remained in the room. Quiet, thoughtful children, like Jane, avail themselves of these little pleasures oftener than is suspected.

"Mother," said William, with great intensity, "I want to ask you please to lend me three dollars and sixty cents."

"What for, Willie?"

"Mother, I just ask you to lend me three dollars and sixty cents."

"But what *for?*"

"Mother, I don't feel I can discuss it any; I simply ask you: Will you lend me three dollars and sixty cents?"

Mrs. Baxter laughed gently. "I don't think I could, Willie, but certainly I should want to know what for."

"Mother, I am going on eighteen years of age, and when I ask for a small sum of money, like three dollars and sixty cents, I think I might be trusted to know how to use it for my own good without having to answer questions like a ch——"

"Why, Willie!" she exclaimed. "You ought to have plenty of money of your own."

"Of course I ought," he agreed warmly. "If you'd ask father to give me a regular allow——"

"No, no; I mean you ought to have plenty left out of that old junk and furniture I let you sell, last month. You had nearly nine dollars!"

"That was five weeks ago," William explained wearily.

"But you certainly must have some of it left. Why, it was *more* than nine dollars, I believe! I think it was nearer ten. Surely you haven't ——"

"Ye Gods!" cried the goaded William. "A person going on eighteen years old ought to be able to spend nine dollars in five weeks without everybody's acting like it was a crime! Mother, I ask you the simple question: Will you *please* lend me three dollars and sixty cents?"

"I don't think I ought to, dear. I'm sure your father wouldn't wish me to, unless you'll tell me what you want it for. In fact, I won't consider it at all unless you do tell me."

"You won't do it?" he quavered.

She shook her head gently. "You see, dear, I'm afraid the reason you don't tell me is because you know that I

wouldn't give it to you if I knew what you wanted it for."

And this perfect diagnosis of the case so disheartened him that after a few monosyllabic efforts to continue the conversation with dignity, he gave it up, and left in such a preoccupation with despondency that he passed the surprised Jane, in the hall, without suspecting what she had been doing.

That evening, after dinner, he made to his father an impassioned appeal for three dollars and sixty cents, laying such stress of pathos on his principal argument that if he couldn't have a dress-suit, at least he ought to be given three dollars and sixty *cents* (the emphasis is William's), that Mr. Baxter was moved in the direction of consent — but not far enough. "I'd like to let you have it, Willie," he said, excusing himself for refusal, "but your mother felt *she* oughtn't to do it, unless you'd say what you wanted it for, and I'm sure she wouldn't like me to do it. I can't let you have it unless you get her to say she wants me to."

Thus advised, the unfortunate made another appeal to his mother the next day, and having brought about no relaxation of the situation, again petitioned his father, on the following evening. So it went, the torn and driven William turning from parent to parent; and surely, since the world began, the special sum of three dollars and sixty cents has never been so often mentioned in any one house and in the same space of time as it was in the house of the Baxters during Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of that oppressive week. But on Friday William disappeared after breakfast and did not return to lunch.

Mrs. Baxter was troubled. During the afternoon she glanced often from the open window of the room where she had gone to sew, but the peaceful neighborhood continued to be peaceful, and no sound of the harassed footsteps of William echoed from the pavement. However, she saw Genesis arrive (in his week-day costume) to do

some weeding, and Jane immediately skip forth for mingled purposes of observation and conversation.

"What *do* they say?" thought Mrs. Baxter, observing that both Jane and Genesis were unusually animated. But for once that perplexity was to be dispersed. After an exciting half-hour Jane came flying to her mother, breathless.

"Mamma," she cried, "I know where Willie is! Genesis told me, 'cause he saw him, an' he talked to him while he was doin' it."

"Doing what? Where?"

"Mamma, listen! What you think Willie's doin'? I bet you can't g——"

"Jane!" Mrs. Baxter spoke sharply. "Tell me what Genesis said, at once."

"Yes'm. Willie's over in a lumber-yard that Genesis comes by on his way from over on the avynoo where all the colored people live — an' he's countin' knot-holes in shingles."

"He is *what?*"

"Yes'm. Genesis knows all about it, because he was thinkin' of doin' it himself, only he says it would be too slow. This is the way it is, mamma — listen, mamma, because this is just exactly the way it is. Well, this lumber-yard man got into some sort of a fuss because he bought millions an' millions of shingles, mamma, that had too many knots in an' the man don't want to pay for 'em, or else the store where he bought 'em won't take 'em back, an' they got to prove how many shingles are bad shingles, or somep'm, and anyway, mamma, that's what Willie's doin'. Every time he comes to a bad shingle, mamma, he puts it somewheres else, or somep'm like that, mamma, an' every time he's put a thousand bad shingles in this other place, they give him six cents. He gets the six cents to keep, mamma — an' that's what he's been doin' all day!"

"Good gracious!"

"Oh, but that's nothing, mamma — just you wait till you hear the rest. *That* part of it isn't anything a *tall*, mamma! You wouldn't hardly notice that part of it, if you knew the other part of it, mamma. Why, that isn't *anything!*" Jane made demonstrations of scorn for the insignificant information already imparted.

"Jane!"

"Yes'm?"

"I want to know everything Genesis told you," said her mother, "and I want you to tell it as quickly as you can."

"Well, I *am* tellin' it, mamma!" Jane protested. "I'm just *beginning* to tell it. I can't tell it unless there's a beginning, can I? How could there be *anything* unless you had to begin it, mamma?"

"Try your best to go on, Jane!"

"Yes'm. Well, Genesis says — Mamma!" Jane interrupted herself with a little outcry. "Oh! I bet *that's* what he had those two market baskets for! Yes, sir! That's just what he did! An' then he needed the rest o' the money and you an' papa wouldn't give him any, and so he began countin' shingles to-day 'cause to-night's the night of the party an' he just *hass* to have it!"

Mrs. Baxter, who had risen to her feet, recalled the episode of the baskets and sank into a chair. "How did Genesis know Willie wanted forty dollars, and if Willie's pawned something how did Genesis know *that?* Did Willie tell Gen——"

"Oh, no, mamma, Willie didn't want forty dollars — only fourteen!"

"But he couldn't get even the cheapest ready-made dress-suit for fourteen dollars."

"Mamma, you're gettin' it all mixed up!" Jane cried. "Listen, mamma! Genesis knows all about a second-hand store over on the avynoo; an' it keeps 'most everything, an' Genesis says it's the nicest store! It keeps waiter suits all the way up to nineteen dollars and ninety-nine cents. Well, an' Genesis wants to get one of those suits,

so he goes in there all the time an' talks to the man an' bargains an' bargains with him, 'cause Genesis says this man is the bargainest man in the wide worl', mamma! That's what Genesis says. Well, an' so this man's name is One-eye Beljus, mamma. That's his name, an' Genesis says so. Well, an' so this man that Genesis told me about that keeps the store — I mean One-eye Beljus, mamma — well, One-eye Beljus had Willie's name written down in a book, an' he knew Genesis worked for fam'lies that have boys like Willie in 'em, an' this morning One-eye Beljus showed Genesis Willie's name written down in his book, an' One-eye Beljus asked Genesis if he knew anybody by that name an' all about him. Well, an' so at first Genesis pretended he was tryin' to remember, because he wanted to find out what Willie went there for. Genesis didn't tell any stories, mamma; he just pretended he couldn't remember, an' so, well, One-eye Beljus kept talkin' an' pretty soon Genesis found out all about it. One-eye Beljus said Willie came in there and tried on the coat of one of those waiter suits ——"

"Oh, no!" gasped Mrs. Baxter.

"Yes'm, an' One-eye Beljus said it was the only one that would fit Willie, an' One-eye Beljus told Willie that suit was worth fourteen dollars, an' Willie said he didn't have any money, but he'd like to trade something else for it. Well, an' so One-eye Beljus said this was an awful fine suit an' the only one he had that had b'longed to a white gentleman. Well, an' so they bargained, an' bargained, an' bargained, an' *bargained!* An' then, well, an' so at last Willie said he'd go an' get everything that b'longed to him, an' One-eye Beljus could pick out enough to make fourteen dollars' worth, an' then Willie could have the suit. Well, an' so Willie came home an' put everything he had that b'longed to him into those two baskets, mamma — that's just what he did, 'cause Genesis says he told One-eye Beljus it was everything that b'longed to him, an' that would take two baskets, mamma. Well,

then, an' so he told One-eye Beljus to pick out fourteen dollars' worth, an' One-eye Beljus ast Willie if he didn't have a watch. Well, Willie took out his watch, an' One-eye Beljus said it was an awful bad watch but he would put it in for a dollar; an' he said, 'I'll put your necktie pin in for forty cents more,' so Willie took it out of his necktie; an' then One-eye Beljus said it would take all the things in the baskets to make I forget how much, mamma, and the watch would be a dollar more, an' the pin forty cents, an' that could leave just three dollars and sixty cents more for Willie to pay before he could get the suit."

Mrs. Baxter's face had become suffused with high color, but she wished to know all that Genesis had said, and, mastering her feelings with an effort, she told Jane to proceed — a command obeyed after Jane had taken several long breaths.

"Well, an' so the worst part of it is, Genesis says, it's because that suit is haunted."

"What!"

"Yes'm," said Jane solemnly; "Genesis says it's haunted. Genesis says everybody over on the avynoo knows all about that suit, an' he says that's why One-eye Beljus never could sell it before. Genesis says One-eye Beljus tried to sell it to a colored man for three dollars, but the man said he wouldn't put it on for three hundred dollars, an' Genesis says he wouldn't either, because it belonged to a Dago waiter that — that ——' Jane's voice sank to a whisper of unctuous horror: she was having a wonderful time! "Mamma, this Dago waiter, he lived over on the avynoo, an' he took a case-knife he'd sharpened — *an' he cut a lady's head off with it!*"

Mrs. Baxter screamed faintly.

"An' he got hung, mamma! If you don't believe it you can ask One-eye Beljus — I guess *he* knows! An' you can ask ——"

"Hush!"

"An' he sold this suit that Willie wants to One-eye Bel-

jus when he was in jail, mamma. He sold it to him before he got hung, mamma."

"Hush, Jane!" 1597992

But Jane couldn't hush now. "An' he had that suit on when he cut the lady's head off, mamma, an' that's why it's haunted. They cleaned it all up excep' a few little spots of bl——"

"*Jane!*" shouted her mother. "You must not talk about such things, and Genesis mustn't tell you stories of that sort!"

"Well, how could he help it, if he told me about Willie?" Jane urged reasonably.

"Never mind! Did that crazy ch—— Did Willie *leave* the baskets in that dreadful place?"

"Yes'm — an' his watch an' pin," Jane informed her impressively. "An' One-eye Beljus wanted to know if Genesis knew Willie, because One-eye Beljus wanted to know if Genesis thought Willie could get the three dollars an' sixty cents, an' One-eye Beljus wanted to know if Genesis thought he could get anything more out of him besides that. He told Genesis he hadn't told Willie he *could* have the suit, after all; he just told him he *thought* he could, but he wouldn't say for certain till he brought him the three dollars and sixty cents. So Willie left all his things there, an' his watch an' ——'

"That will do!" Mrs. Baxter's voice was sharper than it had ever been in Jane's recollection. "I don't need to hear any more — and I don't *want* to hear any more!"

Jane was justly aggrieved. "But mamma, it isn't *my* fault!"

Mrs. Baxter's lips parted to speak, but she checked herself. "Fault?" she said gravely. "I wonder whose fault it really is!"

And with that she went hurriedly into William's room, and made a brief inspection of his clothes-closet and dressing-table. Then, as Jane watched her in awed silence, she strode to the window and called loudly:

"Genesis!"

"Yes'm?" came the voice from below.

"Go to that lumber-yard where Mr. William is at work and bring him here to me at once. If he declines to come, tell him ——" Her voice broke oddly; she choked, but Jane could not decide with what emotion. "Tell him — tell him I ordered you to use force if necessary! Hurry!"

"*Yes'm!*"

Jane ran to the window in time to see Genesis departing seriously through the back gate.

"Mamma ——"

"Don't talk to me now, Jane," Mrs. Baxter said crisply. "I want you to go down in the yard, and when Willie comes tell him I'm waiting for him here in his own room. And don't come with him, Jane. Run!"

"Yes, mamma." Jane was pleased with this appointment: she anxiously desired to be the first to see how Willie "looked."

. . . He looked flurried and flustered and breathless, and there were blisters upon the reddened palms of his hands. "What on earth's the matter, mother?" he asked, as he stood panting before her. "Genesis said something was wrong, and he said you told him to hit me if I wouldn't come."

"Oh, *no!*" she cried. "I only meant I thought perhaps you wouldn't obey any ordinary message ——"

"Well, well, it doesn't matter, but please hurry and say what you want to because I got to get back and ——"

"No," Mrs. Baxter said quietly. "You're not going back to count any more shingles, Willie. How much have you earned?"

He swallowed, but spoke bravely. "Thirty-six cents. But I've been getting lots faster the last two hours and there's a good deal of time before six o'clock. Mother ——"

"No," she said. "You're going over to that horrible place where you've left your clothes and your watch and all those other things in the two baskets, and you're going to bring them home at once."

"Mother!" he cried aghast. "Who told you?"

"It doesn't matter. You don't want your father to find out, do you? Then get those things back here as quickly as you can. They'll have to be fumigated after being in that den."

"They've never been out of the baskets," he protested hotly, "except just to be looked at. They're *my* things, mother, and I had a right to do what I needed to with 'em, didn't I?" His utterance became difficult. "You and father just *can't* understand — and you won't do anything to help me ——"

"Willie, you can go to the party," she said gently. "You didn't need those frightful clothes at all."

"I do!" he cried. "I *got* to have 'em! I *can't* go in my day clo'es! There's a reason you wouldn't understand why I can't. I just *can't!*"

"Yes," she said, "you can go to the party."

"I can't either! Not unless you give me three dollars and twenty-four cents, or unless I can get back to the lumber-yard and earn the rest before ——"

"No!" And the warm color that had rushed over Mrs. Baxter during Jane's sensational recital returned with a vengeance. Her eyes flashed. "If you'd rather I sent a policeman for those baskets, I'll send one. I should prefer to do it — much! And to have that rascal arrested. If you don't want me to send a policeman you can go for them yourself, but you must start within ten minutes, because if you don't I'll telephone headquarters. Ten minutes, Willie, and I mean it!"

He cried out, protesting. She would make him a thing of scorn forever and soil his honor, if she sent a policeman. Mr. Beljus was a fair and honest tradesman, he explained passionately, and had not made the approaches in this matter. Also, the garments in question, though not entirely new, nor of the highest mode, were of good material and in splendid condition. Unmistakably they were evening clothes, and such a bargain at fourteen dollars that

William would guarantee to sell them for twenty after he had worn them this one evening. Mr. Beljus himself had said that he would not even think of letting them go at fourteen to anybody else, and as for the two poor baskets of worn and useless articles offered in exchange, and a bent scarfpin and a worn-out old silver watch that had belonged to great-uncle Ben — why, the ten dollars and forty cents allowed upon them was beyond all ordinary liberality; it was almost charity. There was only one place in town where evening clothes were rented, and the suspicious persons in charge had insisted that William obtain from his father a guarantee to insure the return of the garments in perfect condition. So that was hopeless. And wasn't it better, also, to wear clothes which had only known one previous occupant (as was the case with Mr. Beljus' offering) than to hire what chance hundreds had hired? Finally, there was only one thing to be considered and this was the fact that William *had* to have those clothes!

"Six minutes," said Mrs. Baxter, glancing implacably at her watch. "When it's ten I'll telephone."

And the end of it was, of course, victory for the woman — victory both moral and physical. Three-quarters of an hour later she was unburdening the contents of the two baskets and putting the things back in place, illuminating these actions with an expression of strong distaste — in spite of broken assurances that Mr. Beljus had not more than touched any of the articles offered to him for valuation.

. . . At dinner, which was unusually early that evening, Mrs. Baxter did not often glance toward her son; she kept her eyes from that white face and spent most of her time in urging upon Mr. Baxter that he should be prompt in dressing for a card-club meeting which he and she were to attend that evening. These admonitions of hers were continued so pressingly that Mr. Baxter, after protesting that there was no use in being a whole hour too early, groaningly went to dress without even reading his paper.

William had retired to his own room, where he lay upon his bed in the darkness. He heard the evening noises of the house faintly through the closed door: voices and the clatter of metal and china from the far-away kitchen, Jane's laugh in the hall, the opening and closing of the doors. Then his father seemed to be in distress about something: William heard him complaining to Mrs. Baxter; and though the words were indistinct, the tone was vigorously plaintive. Mrs. Baxter laughed and appeared to make light of his troubles, whatever they were — and presently their footsteps were audible from the stairway; the front door closed emphatically, and they were gone.

Everything was quiet now. The open window showed as a greenish oblong set in black, and William knew that in a little while — half an hour, perhaps — there would come through the stillness of that window the distant sound of violins. That was a moment he dreaded with a dread that ached. And as he lay on his dreary bed, he thought of brightly lighted rooms where other boys were dressing eagerly, faces and hair shining, hearts beating high — boys who would possess this last evening, and the "last waltz together," the last smile and the last sigh.

It did not once enter his mind that he could go to the dance in his "best suit," or that possibly the other young people at the party would be too busy with their own affairs to notice particularly what he wore. It was the unquestionable and granite fact, to his mind, that the whole derisive Wor'd would know the truth about his earlier appearances in his father's clothes. And that was a form of ruin not to be faced. In the protective darkness and seclusion of William's bedroom, it is possible that smarting eyes relieved themselves by blinking rather energetically; it is even possible that there was a minute damp spot upon the pillow. Seventeen cannot always manage the little boy yet alive under all the coverings.

There came a tapping upon the door and a soft voice.

"Will-ee?"

With a sharp exclamation William swung his legs over the edge of the bed and sat up. Of all things he desired not, he desired no conversation with, or on the part of, Jane. But he had forgotten to lock his door — the handle turned, and a dim little figure marched in.

"Willie, Adelia's goin' to put me to bed."

"You g'way from here," he said huskily. "I haven't got time to talk to you. I'm busy."

"Well, you can wait a minute, can't you?" she asked reasonably, "I haf to tell you a joke on mamma."

"I don't want to hear any jokes!"

"Well, I *haf* to tell you this one 'cause she told me to! Oh!" Jane clapped her hand over her mouth and jumped up and down, offering a fantastic silhouette against the light of the open door. "Oh, oh, *oh!*"

"What's matter?"

"She said I mustn't, *mustn't* tell that she told me to tell! My goodness! I forgot that! Mamma took me off alone right after dinner, an' she told me to tell you this joke on her as soon as she an' papa had left the house, but she said, 'Above all *things*,' she said, '*don't* let Willie know *I* said to tell him.' That's just what she said, an' here that's the very first thing I had to go an' do!"

"Well, what of it?"

Jane quieted down. The pangs of her remorse were lost in her love of sensationalism, and her voice sank to the thrilling whisper which it was one of her greatest pleasures to use. "Did you hear what a fuss papa was makin' when he was dressin' for the card-party?"

"I don't care if ——"

"He had to go in his reg'lar clo'es!" whispered Jane triumphantly. "An' this is the joke on mamma: you know that tailor that let papa's dress-suit way, way out; well, mamma thinks that tailor must think she's crazy, or somep'm, 'cause she took papa's dress-suit to him last Monday to get it pressed for this card-party, an' she guesses he must of understood her to tell him to do lots besides just

pressin' it. Anyway, he went an' altered it, an' he took it way, way in again; an' this afternoon when it came back it was even tighter'n what it was in the first place, an' papa couldn't *begin* to get into it! Well, an' so it's all pressed an' everything, an' she stopped on the way out, an' whispered to me that she'd got so upset over the joke on her that she couldn't remember where she put it when she took it out of papa's room after he gave up tryin' to get inside of it. An' that," cried Jane — "that's the funniest thing of all! Why, it's layin' right on her bed this very minute."

In one bound William leaped through the open door. Two seconds sufficed for his passage through the hall to his mother's bedroom — and there, neatly spread upon the lace coverlet and brighter than coronation robes, fairer than Joseph's sacred coat It lay!

NEWTON BOOTH TARKINGTON

How many in the class have read *Penrod* or *Seventeen?* A forest of waving hands is the answer. Pupils know what they like, and find in the work of Mr. Tarkington kindly amusement and sympathetic understanding. He writes of childhood and adolescence with a convincing sureness of touch and a humorous sympathy which brings a smile with often the suggestion of a tear behind it. To Mr. Tarkington the tragedies and joys of youth seem as real as to youth itself, perhaps because he writes of what he has himself experienced. Records tell of a youthful Booth Tarkington whose quick imagination peopled his child world with make-believe characters and captained games of "let's pretend"; *Penrod* and *Penrod and Sam* have caught and made eternal this buoyant spirit of a boy's imagination. At Princeton there is a tradition of a gay youth who threw himself whole-heartedly into every college activity and enlivened by his special gift of song many social hours; in *Seventeen* the same youth, younger and less sophisticated, plunges into every experience with the conviction that it matters mightily.

Booth Tarkington was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1869. In 1893 he was graduated from Princeton University and six years later was given the degree of Master of Arts. In 1919 in recognition of his distinguished work, Princeton con-

ferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Literature. He is such a prolific writer and so well-known to a large public that one finds it hard to believe that he too had to serve his apprenticeship and learn his art through struggle. He tells us that during five years after graduation his income from his writing amounted only to $22.50 and a goodly pile of rejection slips. With the publication of *A Gentleman from Indiana* he won recognition and a market for much of the work which had hitherto remained unsold. Since then novels, short stories, and plays have followed each other in quick succession. *Seventeen*, from which this story is taken, was originally published as a series of short stories which were later collected in book form. *Penrod* and *Penrod and Sam* were similarly published.

Mr. Tarkington still lives in Indianapolis, but spends a part of each year in Kennebunkport, Maine, in the house which he has aptly named "The House that Penrod Built."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. State the slight plot of this story in a few sentences. How does the element of conflict enter into the plot? The interest lies in the fact that the story gives us a situation from real life. The experiences of Willie Baxter are those of most boys of his age, when matters of trivial importance to adults assume a tragic significance to boys. As he says, "At my age there's some things that ought to be done and some things ought not to be done." Boys sometimes object to this story on the ground that Willie's actions are exaggerated; "not true to life," they claim. At once some one in the same class is sure to answer, "They're not exaggerated at all; I know a boy exactly like that." Read more of *Seventeen*, the book from which the story is taken, and discuss this question in class.
2. One might call this story a study in attitudes: the attitude of the adolescent boy toward the people of his world; of ten-year-old Jane toward her older brother; of the mother toward her boy whom she sees springing suddenly into manhood; of the father impatient of his son's conduct and objecting to the purchase of the new suit "on the principle of the thing." Is Mr. Tarkington truthful in his interpretation of their attitudes?

3. Booth Tarkington is fond of dogs and considers them the natural accompaniment of youth. Had the sight of Clematis always been "obviously painful" to Willie? Note the part which the dog Duke plays in the Penrod stories. He also likes and understands negro characters. Herman and Verman add humor to *Penrod* as Genesis does to this story. Is the dialect of Genesis well done? Has he the characteristic traits of the negro?
4. The most successful writing is based upon first-hand experience. Why try to write about pirate ships or English dukes when stories of everyday life are crying to be told? Do any of the subjects below suggest personal experiences about which you can write entertainingly?

   My First Dress-Suit
   How I Won Over Mother
   Earning Money for a Special Purpose
   When My Little Sister Is a Trial
   On Younger Brothers
   The Difference between Fathers and Mothers
   When Brother Was Seventeen — Recollections of a Younger Sister

Stories of Youth:

The Ransom of Red Chief — O. Henry
Mary Smith — Booth Tarkington
Little Gentleman — Booth Tarkington
Chickens — Edna Ferber
His Mother's Son — Edna Ferber
Love Among the Blackboards — Myra Kelly
Not Wanted — Jesse Lynch Williams
The Boy Who was Born to be Hanged — Irvin S. Cobb
Tol'able David — Joseph Hergesheimer

THE BUNKER MOUSE

By FREDERICK STUART GREENE

Larry Walsh slowly climbed the stairs of a house near the waterfront, in a run-down quarter of old New York. He halted on the top floor, blinking in the dim light that struggled through the grime-coated window of the hallway. After a time he knocked timidly on the door before him.

There was nothing in the pleasant "Come in" to alarm the small man; he started to retreat, but stopped when the door was thrown wide.

"Then it's yourself, Mouse! It's good for the eyes just to look at you."

The woman who greeted Walsh was in striking contrast to her shabby surroundings. Everything about the old-fashioned house, one floor of which was her home, spoke of neglected age. This girl, from the heavy, black braids encircling her head to the soles of her shoes, vibrated youth. Her cheeks glowed with the color of splendid health; her blue Irish eyes were bright with it. Friendliness had rung in the tones of her rich brogue, and showed now in her smile as she waited for her visitor to answer.

Larry stood before her too shy to speak.

"Is it word from Dan you're bringin' me?" she encouraged. "But there, now, I'm forgettin' me manners! Come in, an' I'll be makin' you a cup of tea." She took his arm impulsively, with the frank comradeship of a young woman for a man much older than herself, and led him to a chair.

Larry sat ready for flight, his cap held stiffly across his knees. He watched every movement of the girl, a look of pathetic meekness in his eyes.

"You're right, Mrs. Sullivan,' he said after an effort; "Dan was askin' me to step in on my way to the ship."

She turned quickly from the stove.

"You're not tellin' me now Dan ain't comin' himself, an' the boat leavin' this night?"

Larry was plainly uneasy.

"Well, you see — it's — now it's just like I'm tellin' you, Mrs. Sullivan, he's that important to the chief, is Dan, they can't get on without him to-day at all."

"Then bad luck, I say, to the chief! Look at the grand supper I am after fixin' for Dan!"

"Oh, Mary — Mrs. Sullivan, don't be speakin' disrespectful of the chief, an' him thinkin' so highly of Dan!"

Mary's blue eyes flashed.

"An' why wouldn't he! It's not every day he'll find the likes of Dan, with the strong arms an' the great legs of him, not to mention his grand looks." She crossed to Larry, her face aglow. "Rest easy now while you drink your tea," she urged kindly, "an' tell me what the chief be wantin' him for."

She drew her chair close to Larry, but the small man turned shyly from her searching gaze.

"Well, you see, Mrs. ——"

"Call me Mary. It's a year an' more now since the first time you brought Dan home to me." A sudden smile lighted her face. "Well I remember how frightened you looked when first you set eyes on me. Was you thinkin' to find Dan's wife a slip of a girl?"

"No; he told me you was a fine, big lass." He looked from Mary to the picture of an older woman that hung above the mantel. "That'll be your mother, I'm thinkin'." Then, with abrupt change, "When did you leave the old country, Mary?"

"A little more'n a year before I married Dan. But tell me, Mouse, about the chief wantin' him."

"Well, you see, Dan's that handy-like ——"

"That's the blessed truth you're speakin'," she interrupted, her face lovely with its flush of pride. "But tell me more, that's a darlin'."

Larry thought rapidly before he spoke again.

"Only the last trip I was hearin' the chief say: 'Dan,' says he, 'it's not long now you'll be swingin' the shovel. I'll be makin' you water-tender soon.'"

Mary leaned nearer, and caught both of Larry's hands in hers.

"Them's grand words you're sayin'; they fair makes my heart jump." She paused; the gladness faded quickly from her look. "Then the chief don't know Dan sometimes takes a drop?"

"Ain't the chief Irish himself? Every man on the boiler takes his dram." Her wistful eyes spurred him on. "Sure's I'm sitting here, Dan's the soberest of the lot."

Mary shook her head sadly.

"Good reason I have to fear the drink; 'twas that spoiled my mother's life."

Larry rose quickly.

"Your mother never drank!"

"No; the saints preserve us!" She looked up in surprise at Larry's startled face. "It was my father. I don't remember only what mother told me; he left her one night, ravin' drunk, an' never come back."

Larry hastily took up his cap.

"I must be goin' back to the ship now," he said abruptly. "An' thank you, Mary, for the tea." He hurried from the room.

When Larry reached the ground floor he heard Mary's door open again.

"Can I be troublin' you, Mouse, to take something to Dan?" She came down the stairs, carrying a dinner-pail. "I'd thought to be eatin' this supper along with him," Mary said, disappointment in her tone. She followed Larry to the outer landing. "It's the true word you was sayin', he'll be makin' Dan water-tender?"

Larry forced himself to look into her anxious eyes.

"Sure; it's just as I said, Mary."

"Then I'll pray this night to the Mother of God for that

chief; for soon" — Mary hesitated; a light came to her face that lifted the girl high above her squalid surroundings — "the extra pay'll be comin' handy soon," she ended, her voice as soft as a Killarney breeze.

Larry, as he looked at the young wife standing between the scarred columns of the old doorway, was stirred to the farthest corner of his heart.

"They only smile like that to the angels," he thought. Then aloud: "Bad cess to me! I was forgettin' entirely! Dan said to leave this with you." He pushed crumpled, coal-soiled money into her hand, and fled down the steps.

When Larry heard the door close creakily behind him, he looked back to where Mary had stood, his eyes blinking rapidly. After some moments he walked slowly on toward the wharves. In the distance before him the spars and funnels of ships loomed through the dusk, their outlines rapidly fading into the sky beyond — a late September sky, now fast turning to a burned-out sheet of dull gray.

Larry went aboard his ship, and, going to the forecastle, peered into an upper bunk.

"Your baby's not to home, Mouse," a voice jeered. "I saw him over to Flanagan's awhile ago."

A hopeless look crossed Larry's face.

"Give me a hand up the side, like a good lad, Jim, when I come aboard again."

A few minutes later the little man was making his way back to the steamer, every step of his journey harassed by derisive shouts as he dodged between the lines of belated trucks that jammed the West Street from curb to stringpiece. He pushed a wheelbarrow before him, his knees bending under the load it held. Across the barrow, legs and head dangling over the sides, lay an unconscious heap that when sober answered to the name of Dan Sullivan.

Larry Walsh, stoker on the coastwise freighter San Gardo, was the butt of the ship; every man of the crew imposed on his good nature. He was one of those persons

"just fool enough to do what he's told to do." For thirty of his fifty years he had been a seaman, and the marks of a sailor's life were stamped hard on his face. His weathered cheeks were plowed by wrinkles that stretched, deep furrowed, from his red-gray hair to the corners of his mouth. From under scant brows he peered out on the world with near-sighted eyes; but whenever a smile broadened his wide mouth, his eyes would shine with a kindly light.

Larry's defective sight had led to his banishment as a sailor from the decks. During a storm off Hatteras a stoker had fallen and died on the boiler-room plates.

"It don't take no eyes at all to see clean to the back of a Scotch boiler," the boat-swain had told the chief engineer. "I can give you that little squint-eyed feller." So, at the age of forty or thereabouts, Larry left the cool, wind-swept deck to take up work new to him in the super-heated, gas-stifling air of the fire-room. Though entered on the ship's papers as a sailor, he had gone without complaint down the straight ladders to the very bottom of the hull. Bidden to take the dead stoker's place, "he was just fool enough to do what he was told to do."

Larry was made the coal-passer of that watch, and began at once the back-breaking task of shoveling fuel from the bunkers to the floor outside, ready for the stokers to heave into the boilers. He had been passing less than an hour during his first watch when the coal ran short in the lower bunker. He speared with a slice-bar in the bunker above. The fuel rested at a steeper angle than his weak eyes could see, and his bar dislodged a wedged lump; an instant later the new passer was half buried under a heap of sliding coal. Bewildered, but unhurt, he crawled to the boiler-room, shaking the coal from his back and shoulders. Through dust-filled ears he heard the general laugh at his plight.

"Look at the nigger Irishman!" a stoker called.

"Irishman!" came the answer. "It's no man at all; it's a mouse you're seein' — a bunker mouse."

From that moment the name Larry Walsh was forgotten.

The San Gardo was late getting away that night; two bells of the evening watch had sounded when at last she backed from her pier into the North River and began the first mile of her trip to Galveston. Though she showed a full six inches of the red paint below her water-line, the loading of her freight had caused the delay. In the hold lay many parts of saw-mill machinery. When the last of this clumsy cargo had settled to its allotted place, there was left an unusual void of empty blackness below the deck hatches.

"It's up to you now, Matie," the stevedore had said to the impatient first officer. "My job's done right, but she'll roll her sticks out if it's rough outside."

"That's nice; hand me all the cheerful news you have when you know they hung out storm-warnings at noon," the officer had growled as the stevedore went ashore.

Signs that both the Government and the stevedore had predicted correctly began to show as soon as the vessel cleared the Hook. The wind was blowing half a gale from the southeast and had already kicked up a troublesome sea. The ship, resenting her half-filled hold, pitched with a viciousness new to the crew.

There was unusual activity on board the San Gardo that night. Long after the last hatch-cover had been placed, the boatswain continued to inspect, going over the deck from bow to stern to see that every movable thing was lashed fast.

In the engine-room as well extra precautions were taken. It was Robert Neville's watch below; he was the first of the three assistant engineers. Neville, a young man, was unique in that most undemocratic institution, a ship's crew, for he apparently considered the stokers under him as human beings. For one of his fire-room force he had an actual liking.

"Why do you keep that fellow they call Bunker Mouse in your watch?" the chief once asked.

"Because he's willing and the handiest man I have," Neville answered promptly.

"Well, suit yourself; but that brute Sullivan will kill him some day, I hear."

"I don't know about that, Chief. The Mouse is game."

"So's a trout; but it's got a damn poor show against a shark," the chief had added, with a shrug.

Neville's watch went on duty shortly after the twin lights above Sandy Hook had dropped astern. The ship was then rolling heavily enough to make walking difficult on the oily floor of the engine-room; in the boiler-room, lower by three feet, to stand steady even for a moment was impossible. Here, in this badly lighted quarter of the ship, ill humor hung in the air thicker than the coal-gas.

Dan Sullivan, partly sobered, fired his boiler with sullen regularity, his whole bearing showing ugly readiness for a fight. Larry, stoking next to him, kept a weather-eye constantly on his fellow-laborer.

Neville's men had been on duty only a few minutes when the engineer came to the end of the passage and called Larry.

"That's right," Dan growled; "run along, you engineer's pet, leavin' your work for me to do!"

Larry gave him no answer as he hurried away.

"Make fast any loose thing you see here," Neville ordered.

Larry went about the machinery-crowded room securing every object that a lurching ship might send flying from its place. When he returned to the fire-room he heard the water-tender shouting:

"Sullivan, you're loafin' on your job! Get more fire under that boiler!"

"An' ain't I doin' double work, with that damn Mouse forever sneakin' up to the engine-room?"

Larry, giving no sign that he had heard Dan's growling answer, drove his scoop into the coal, and with a swinging thrust spread its heaped load evenly over the glowing bed in the fire-box. He closed the fire-door with a quick slam,

for in a pitching boiler-room burning coal can fall from an open furnace as suddenly as new coal can be thrown into it.

"So, you're back," Dan sneered. "It's a wonder you wouldn't stay the watch up there with your betters."

Larry went silently on with his work.

"Soft, ain't it, you jellyfish, havin' me do your job? You eel, you ——" Dan poured out a stream of abusive oaths.

Still Larry did not answer.

"Dan's ravin' mad," a man on the port boilers said. "Will he soak the Mouse to-night, I wonder?"

"Sure," the stoker beside him answered. "An' it's a dirty shame for a big devil like him to smash the little un."

"You're new on this ship; you don't know 'em. The Mouse is a regular mother to that booze-fighter, an' small thanks he gets. But wait, an' you'll see something in a minute."

Dan's temper, however, was not yet at fighting heat. He glared a moment longer at Larry, then turned sullenly to his boiler. He was none too steady on his legs, and this, with the lurching of the ship, made his work ragged. After a few slipshod passes he struck the door-frame squarely with his scoop, spilling the coal to the floor.

"Damn your squint eyes!" he yelled. "You done that, Mouse! You shoved ag'in' me. Now scrape it all up, an' be quick about it!"

Without a word, while his tormentor jeered and cursed him, Larry did as he was told.

"Ain't you got no fight at all in your shriveled-up body?" Dan taunted as Larry finished. "You're a disgrace to Ireland, that's what you are."

Larry, still patient, turned away. Dan sprang to him and spun the little man about.

"Where's the tongue in your ugly mouth?" Dan was shaking with rage. "I'll not be havin' the likes of you follow in' me from ship to ship, an' sniffin' at my heels ashore. I won't stand for it no longer, do you hear? Do you think

I need a nurse? Now say you'll leave this ship when we makes port, or I'll break every bone in you."

Dan towered above Larry, his arm drawn back ready to strike. Every man in the room stopped work to watch the outcome of the row.

At the beginning of the tirade Larry's thin shoulders had straightened; he raised his head; his lower jaw, undershot, was set hard. The light from the boiler showed his near-sighted eyes steady on Sullivan, unafraid.

"Get on with your work, an' don't be a fool, Dan," he said quietly.

"A fool, am I!"

Dan's knotted fist flashed to within an inch of Larry's jaw. The Bunker Mouse did not flinch. For a moment the big stoker's arm quivered to strike, then slowly fell.

"You ain't worth smashin'," Sullivan snarled, and turned away.

"Well, what d' yer know about that!" the new stoker cried.

"It's that way all the time," he was answered; "there ain't a trip Dan don't bawl the Mouse out to a fare-you-well; but he never lays hand to 'im. None of us knows why."

"You don't? Well, I do. The big slob's yeller, an' I'll show 'im up." The stoker crossed to Sullivan. "See here, Bo, why don't you take on a man your size?" He thrust his face close to Dan's and shouted the answer to his question: "I'll tell you why. You ain't got sand enough."

Dan's teeth snapped closed, then parted to grin at his challenger.

"Do you think you're big enough?" The joy of battle was in his growl.

"Yes, I do." The man put up his hands.

Instantly Dan's left broke down the guard; his right fist landed squarely on the stoker's jaw, sending him reeling to the bunker wall, where he fell. It was a clean knock-out.

"Go douse your friend with a pail of water, Mouse." Dan, still grinning, picked up his shovel and went to work.

When Neville's watch went off duty, Larry found the sea no rougher than on countless other runs he had made along the Atlantic coast. The wind had freshened to a strong gale, but he reached the forecastle with no great difficulty.

Without marked change the San Gardo carried the same heavy weather from Barnegat Light to the Virginia capes. Beyond Cape Henry the blow began to stiffen and increased every hour as the freighter plowed steadily southward. Bucking head seas every mile of the way, she picked up Diamond Shoals four hours behind schedule. As she plunged past the tossing light-ship, Larry, squinting through a forecastle port, wondered how long its anchor chains would hold. The San Gardo was off Jupiter by noon the third day out, running down the Florida coast; the wind-bent palms showed faintly through the driving spray.

Neville's watch went on duty that night at eight. As his men left the forecastle a driving rain beat against their backs, and seas broke over the port bow at every downward plunge of the ship. To gain the fire-room door, they clung to rail or stanchion to save themselves from being swept overboard. They held on desperately as each wave flooded the deck, watched their chance, then sprang for the next support. On freighters no cargo space is wasted below decks in passage ways for the crew.

When Larry reached the fire-room there was not a dry inch of cloth covering his wiry body. He and his fellow-stokers took up immediately the work of the men they had relieved, and during the first hours of their watch fired the boilers with no more difficulty than is usual in heavy weather.

At eleven o'clock the speaking-tube whistled, and a moment later Neville came to the end of the passage.

'What are you carrying?" he shouted to the water-tender. "We've got to keep a full head of steam on her to-night."

"We've got it, Mr. Neville — one hundred and sixty, an' we've held between that and sixty-five ever since I've been on."

"The captain says we've made Tortugas. We lost three hours on the run from Jupiter," Neville answered, and went back to his engine.

During the next hour no one on deck had to tell these men, toiling far below the water-line, that wind and sea had risen. They had warnings enough. Within their steel-incased quarters every bolt and rivet sounded the over-strain forced upon it. In the engine-room the oiler could no longer move from the throttle. Every few minutes now, despite his watchfulness, a jarring shiver spread through the hull as the propeller, thrown high, raced wildly in air before he could shut off steam.

At eleven-thirty the indicator clanged, and its arrow jumped to half-speed ahead. A moment later the men below decks "felt the rudder" as the San Gardo, abandoning further attempts to hold her course, swung about to meet the seas head on.

Eight bells — midnight — struck, marking the end of the shift; but no one came down the ladders to relieve Neville's watch. The growls of the tired men rose above the noise in the fire-room. Again Neville came through the passage.

"The tube to the bridge is out of commission," he called, "but I can raise the chief. He says no man can live on deck; one's gone overboard already. The second watch can't get out of the forecastle. It's up to us, men, to keep this ship afloat, and steam's the only thing that'll do it."

For the next hour and the next the fire-room force and the two men in the engine room stuck doggedly to their work. They knew that the San Gardo was making a desperate struggle, that it was touch and go whether the ship would live out the hurricane or sink to the bottom. They knew also, to the last man of them, that if for a moment the ship fell off broadside to the seas, the giant waves

would roll her over and over like an empty barrel in a mill-race. The groaning of every rib and plate in the hull, the crash of seas against the sides, the thunder of waves breaking on deck, drowned the usual noises below.

The color of the men's courage began to show. Some kept grimly at their work, dumb from fear. Others covered fright with profanity, cursing the storm, the ship, their mates, cursing themselves. Larry, as he threw coal steadily through his fire-doors, hummed a broken tune. He gave no heed to Dan, who grew more savage as the slow hours of overtoil dragged by.

About four in the morning Neville called Larry to the engine-room. On his return Dan blazed out at him:

"Boot-lickin' Neville ag'in, was you? I'd lay you out, you shrimp, only I want you to do your work."

Larry took up his shovel; as usual his silence enraged Sullivan.

"You chicken-livered wharf-rat, ain't you got no spunk to answer wid?" Dan jerked a slice-bar from the fire and hurled it to the floor at Larry's feet. The little man leaped in the air; the white-hot end of the bar, bounding from the floor, missed his legs by an inch.

Larry's jaw shot out; he turned on Sullivan, all meekness gone.

"Dan," he cried shrilly, "if you try that again ——"

"Great God! what's that!"

Dan's eyes were staring; panic showed on every face in the room. The sound of an explosion had come from the forward hold. Another followed, and another, a broadside of deafening reports. The terrifying sounds came racing fast. They reached the bulkhead nearest them, and tore through the fire-room, bringing unmasked fear to every man of the watch. The crew stood for a moment awed, then broke, and, rushing for the ladder, fought for a chance to escape this new, unknown madness of the storm.

Only Larry kept his head.

"Stop! Come back!" His shrill voice carried above

the terrifying noise. "It's the plates bucklin' between the ribs."

"Plates! Hell! we're sinkin'!"

Neville rushed in from the engine-room.

"Back to your fires, men, or we'll all drown! Steam! Keep up ——" He was shouting at full-lung power, but his cries were cut short. Again the deafening reports started at the bows. Again, crash after crash, the sounds came tearing aft as if a machine-gun were raking the vessel from bow to stern. At any time these noises would bring terror to men locked below decks; but now, in the half-filled cargo spaces, each crashing report was like the bursting of a ten-inch shell.

Neville went among the watch, urging, commanding, assuring them that these sounds meant no real danger to the ship. He finally ended the panic by beating the more frightened ones back to their boilers.

Then for hours, at every plunge of the ship, the deafening boom of buckling plates continued until the watch was crazed by the sound.

This new terror began between four and five in the morning, when the men had served double time under the grueling strain. At sunrise another misery was added to their torture: the rain increased suddenly, and fell a steady cataract to the decks. This deluge and the flying spray sent gallons of water down the stack; striking the breeching plates, it was instantly turned to steam and boiling water. As the fagged stokers bent before the boilers, the hot water, dripping from the breeching, washed scalding channels through the coal-dust down their bare backs. They hailed this new torment with louder curses, but continued to endure it for hours, while outside the hurricane raged, with no end, no limit, to its power.

Since the beginning of the watch the bilge-pumps had had all they could do to handle the leakage coming from the seams of the strained hull. Twice Neville had taken the throttle and sent his oiler to clear the suctions. The

violent lurching of the ship had churned up every ounce of sediment that had lain undisturbed beneath the floor-plates since the vessel's launching. Sometime between seven and eight all the bilge-pumps clogged at the same moment, and the water began rising at a rate that threatened the fires. It became a question of minutes between life and death for all hands. Neville, working frantically to clear the pumps, yelled to the oiler to leave the throttle and come to him. The water, gaining fast, showed him that their combined efforts were hopeless. He ran to the boiler-room for more aid. Here the water had risen almost to the fires; as the ship rolled, it slushed up between the floor-plates and ran in oily streams about the men's feet. Again panic seized the crew.

"Come on, lads!" Sullivan shouted above the infernal din. "We'll be drowned in this hell-hole!"

In the next second he was halfway up the ladder; below him, clinging to the rungs like frightened apes, hung other stokers.

"Come back, you fool!" Neville shouted. "Open that deck-door, and you'll swamp the ship!"

Dan continued to climb.

"Come down or I'll fire!"

"Shoot an' be damned to you!" Dan called back.

The report of Neville's revolver was lost in the noise; but the bullet, purposely sent high, spattered against the steel plate above Dan's head. He looked down. Neville, swaying with the pitching floor, was aiming true for his second shot. Cursing at the top of his voice, Dan scrambled down the ladder, pushing the men below him to the floor.

"Back to your boilers!" Neville ordered; but the stokers, huddled in a frightened group, refused to leave the ladder.

It was only a matter of seconds now before the fires would be drenched. Bilge-water was splashing against the under boiler-plates, filling the room with dense steam. Neville left the men and raced for the engine-room. He

found Larry and the oiler working desperately at the valve-wheel of the circulating-pump. Neville grasped the wheel, and gave the best he had to open the valve. This manifold, connecting the pump with the bilges, was intended only for emergency use. It had not been opened for months, and was now rusted tight. The three men, straining every muscle, failed to budge the wheel. After the third hopeless attempt, Larry let go, and without a word bolted through the passage to the fire-room.

"You miserable quitter!" Neville screamed after him, and bent again to the wheel.

As he looked up, despairing of any chance to loosen the rusted valve, Larry came back on the run, carrying a coal-pick handle. He thrust it between the spokes of the wheel.

"Now, Mr. Neville, all together!" His Celtic jaw was set hard.

All three threw their weight against the handle. The wheel stirred.

As they straightened for another effort, a louder noise of hissing steam sounded from the boilers, and the fire-room force, mad with fright, came crowding through the passage to the higher floor of the engine-room.

"Quick! Together!" Neville gasped.

The wheel moved an inch.

"Once more! *Now!*"

The wheel turned and did not stop. The three men dropped the lever, seized the wheel, and threw the valve wide open.

"Good work, men!" Neville cried, and fell back exhausted.

The centrifugal pump was thrown in at the last desperate moment. When the rusted valve finally opened, water had risen to the lower grate-bars under every boiler in the fire-room. But once in action, the twelve-inch suction of the giant pump did its work with magic swiftness.

In less than thirty seconds the last gallon of water in the

bilges had been lifted and sent, rushing through the discharge, overboard.

Neville faced the boiler-room crew sternly.

"Now, you cowards, get to your fires!" he said.

As the men slunk back through the passage Dan growled:

"May that man some day burn in hell!"

"Don't be wishin' him no such luck," an angry voice answered; "wish him down here wid us."

The morning dragged past; noon came, marking the sixteenth hour that the men, imprisoned below the sea-swept decks, had struggled to save the ship. Sundown followed, and the second night of their unbroken toil began. They stuck to it, stood up somehow under the racking grind, their nerves quivering, their bodies craving food, their eyes gritty from the urge of sleep, while always the hideous noises of the gale screamed in their ears. The machine-gun roar of buckling plates, raking the battered hull, never ceased.

With each crawling minute the men grew more silent, more desperate. Dan Sullivan let no chance pass to vent his spleen on Larry. Twice during the day his fellow-stokers, watching the familiar scene, saw the big man reach the point of crushing the small one; but the ever-expected blow did not fall.

Shortly after midnight the first hope came to the exhausted men that their fight might not be in vain. Though the buckling plates still thundered, though the floor under their feet still pitched at crazy angles, there was a "feel" in the fire-room that ribs and beams and rivets were not so near the breaking-point.

Neville came to the end of the passage.

"The hurricane's blowing itself to death," he shouted. "Stick to it, boys, for an hour longer; the second watch can reach us by then."

The hour passed, but no relief came. The wind had

lost some force, but the seas still broke over the bows, pouring tons of water to the deck. The vessel pitched as high, rolled as deep, as before.

As the men fired their boilers they rested the filled scoops on the floor and waited for the ship to roll down. Then a quick jerk of the fire-door chain, a quick heave of the shovel, and the door was snapped shut before the floor rolled up again. Making one of these hurried passes, Larry swayed on tired legs. He managed the toss and was able to close the door before he fell hard against Dan. His sullen enemy instantly launched a new tirade, fiercer, more blasphemous, than any before. He ended a stream of oaths, and rested the scoop ready for his throw.

"I'll learn yuh, yuh snivelin' ——" The ship rolled deep. Dan jerked the fire-door open — "yuh snivelin' shrimp!" He glared at Larry as he made the pass. He missed the opening. His shovel struck hard against the boiler front. The jar knocked Dan to the floor, pitched that moment at its steepest angle. He clutched desperately to gain a hold on the smooth-worn steel plates, his face distorted by fear as he slid down to the fire.

Larry, crying a shrill warning, sprang between Sullivan and the open furnace. He stooped, and with all the strength he could gather shoved the big stoker from danger. Then above the crashing sounds a shriek tore the steam-clouded air of the fire-room. Larry had fallen!

As his feet struck the ash-door, the ship rolled up. A cascade falling from Dan's fire had buried Larry's legs to the knees under a bed of white-hot coals. He shrieked again the cry of the mortally hurt as Dan dragged him too late from before the open door.

"Mouse! Mouse!" Horror throbbed in Sullivan's voice. "You're hurted bad!" He knelt, holding Larry in his arms, while others threw water on the blazing coals.

"Speak, lad!" Dan pleaded. "Speak to me!"

The fire-room force stood over them silenced. Accident, death even, they always expected; but to see Dan Sullivan

show pity for any living thing, and, above all, for the Bunker Mouse ——

The lines of Larry's tortured face eased.

"It's the last hurt I'll be havin', Dan," he said before he fainted.

"Don't speak the word, Mouse, an' you just after savin' me life!" Then the men in the fire-room saw a miracle, for tears filled the big stoker's eyes.

Neville had heard Larry's cry and rushed to the boiler-room.

"For God's sake! what's happened now?"

Dan pointed a shaking finger. Neville looked once at what only a moment before had been the legs and feet of a man. As he turned quickly from the sight the engineer's face was like chalk.

"Here, two of you," he called unsteadily, "carry him to the engine-room."

Dan threw the men roughly aside.

"Leave him be," he growled. "Don't a one of you put hand on him!" He lifted Larry gently and, careful of each step, crossed the swaying floor.

"Lay him there by the dynamo," Neville ordered when they had reached the engine-room.

Dan hesitated.

"'Tain't fittin', sir, an' him so bad hurt. Let me be takin' him to the store-room."

Neville looked doubtfully up the narrow stairs.

"We can't get him there with this sea running."

Sullivan spread his legs wide, took both of Larry's wrists in one hand, and swung the unconscious man across his back. He strode to the iron stairs and began to climb. As he reached the first grating Larry groaned. Dan stopped dead; near him the great cross-heads were plunging steadily up and down.

"God, Mr. Neville, did he hit ag'in' somethin'?" The sweat of strain and fear covered his face.

The vessel leaped to the crest of a wave, and dropped sheer into the trough beyond.

"No; but for God's sake, man, go on! You'll pitch with him to the floor if she does that again!"

Dan, clinging to the rail with his free hand, began climbing the second flight.

At the top grating Neville sprang past him to the storeroom door.

"Hold him a second longer," he called, and spread an armful of cotton waste on the vise bench.

Dan laid Larry on the bench. He straightened his own great body for a moment, then sat down on the floor and cried.

Neville, pretending not to see Dan's distress, brought more waste. As he placed it beneath his head Larry groaned. Dan, still on the floor, wrung his hands, calling on the saints and the Virgin to lighten the pain of this man it had been his joy to torture.

Neville turned to him.

"Get up from there!" he cried sharply. "Go see what you can find to help him."

Dan left the room, rubbing his red-flanneled arm across his eyes. He returned quickly with a can of cylinder oil, and poured it slowly over the horribly burned limbs.

"There ain't no bandages, sir; only this." He held out a shirt belonging to the engineer; his eyes pleaded his question. Neville nodded, and Dan tore the shirt in strips. When he finished the task, strange to his clumsy hands, Larry had regained consciousness and lay trying pitifully to stifle his moans.

"Does it make you feel aisier, Mouse?" Dan leaned close to the quivering lips to catch the answer.

"It helps fine," Larry answered, and fainted again.

"You'll be leavin' me stay wid him, sir?" Dan begged. "'Twas for me he's come to this."

Neville gave consent, and left the two men together.

Between four and five in the morning, when Neville's watch had lived through thirty-three unbroken hours of the

fearful grind, a shout that ended in a screaming laugh ran through the fire-room. High above the toil-crazed men a door had opened and closed. A form, seen dimly through the smoke and steam, was moving backward down the ladder. Again the door opened; another man came through. Every shovel in the room fell to the steel floor; every man in the room shouted or laughed or cried.

The engine-room door, too, had opened, admitting the chief and his assistant. Not until he had examined each mechanical tragedy below did the chief give time to the human one above.

"Where's that man that's hurt?" he asked as he came, slowly, from an inspection of the burned-out bearings down the shaft alley.

Neville went with him to the store-room. Dan, sagging under fatigue, clung to the bench where Larry lay moaning.

"You can go now, Sullivan," Neville told him.

Dan raised his head, remorse, entreaty, stubbornness in his look.

"Let me be! I'll not leave him!"

The chief turned to Neville.

"What's come over that drunk?" he asked.

"Ever since the Mouse got hurt, Sullivan's acted queer, just like a woman."

"Get to your quarters, Sullivan," the chief ordered. "We'll take care of this man."

Dan's hands closed; for an instant he glared rebellion from blood-shot eyes. Then the iron law of sea discipline conquering, he turned to Larry.

"The blessed Virgin aise you, poor Mouse!" he mumbled huskily and slouched out through the door.

At midday the San Gardo's captain got a shot at the sun. Though his vessel had been headed steadily northeast for more than thirty hours, the observation showed that she had made twenty-eight miles sternway to the southwest.

By two in the afternoon the wind had dropped to half a gale, making a change of course possible. The captain signaled full speed ahead, and the ship, swinging about, began limping across the gulf, headed once more toward Galveston.

Neville, who had slept like a stone, came on deck just before sunset. The piled-up seas, racing along the side, had lost their breaking crests; the ship rose and fell with some degree of regularity. He called the boatswain and went to the store-room.

They found Larry in one of his conscious moments.

"Well, Mouse, we're going to fix you in a better place," the engineer called with what heart he could show.

"Thank you kindly, sir," Larry managed to answer; "but 'tis my last voyage, Mr. Neville." And the grit that lay hidden in the man's soul showed in his pain-twisted smile.

They carried him up the last flight of iron stairs to the deck. Clear of the engine-room, the boatswain turned toward the bow.

"No. The other way, Boson," Neville ordered.

The chief, passing them, stopped.

"Where are you taking him, Mr. Neville?"

"The poor fellow's dying, sir," Neville answered in low voice.

"Well, where are you taking him?" the chief persisted.

"I'd like to put him in my room, sir."

"A stoker in officers' quarters!" The chief frowned. "Sunday-school discipline!" He disappeared through the engine-room door, slamming it after him.

They did what they could, these seamen, for the injured man; on freighters one of the crew has no business to get hurt. They laid Larry in Neville's berth and went out, leaving a sailor to watch over him.

The sun rose the next day in a cloudless sky, and shone down on a brilliant sea of tumbling, white-capped waves. Far off the starboard bow floated a thin line of smoke from

a tug's funnel, the first sign to the crew since the hurricane that the world was not swept clean of ships. Two hours later the tug was standing by, her captain hailing the San Gardo through a megaphone.

"Run in to New Orleans!" he shouted.

"I cleared for Galveston, and I'm going there," the San Gardo's captain called back.

"No, you ain't neither."

"I'd like to know why I won't."

"Because you can't" — the answer carried distinctly across the waves — "there ain't no such place. It's been washed off the earth."

The San Gardo swung farther to the west and, with her engine pounding at every stroke, limped on toward the Mississippi.

At five o'clock a Port Eads pilot climbed over the side, and, taking the vessel through South Pass, straightened her in the smooth, yellow waters of the great river for the hundred-mile run to New Orleans.

When the sun hung low over the sugar plantations that stretch in flat miles to the east and west beyond the levees, when all was quiet on land and water and ship, Neville walked slowly to the forecastle.

"Sullivan," he called, "come with me."

Dan climbed down from his bunk and came to the door; the big stoker searched Neville's face with a changed, sobered look.

"I've been wantin' all this time to go to 'im. How's he now, sir?"

"He's dying, Sullivan, and has asked for you."

Outside Neville's quarters Dan took off his cap and went quietly into the room.

Larry lay with closed eyes, his face ominously white.

Dan crept clumsily to the berth and put his big hand on Larry's shoulder.

"It's me, Mouse. They wouldn't leave me come no sooner."

Larry's head moved slightly; his faded eyes opened.

Dan stooped in awkward embarrassment until his face was close to Larry.

"I come to ask you ——" Dan stopped. The muscles of his thick neck moved jerkily — "to ask you, Mouse, before — to forgit the damn mean things — I done to you, Mouse."

Larry made no answer; he kept his failing sight fixed on Dan.

After a long wait Sullivan spoke again.

"An' to think you done it, Mouse, for me!"

A light sprang to Larry's eyes, flooding their near-sighted gaze with sudden anger.

"For you!" The cry came from his narrow chest with jarring force. "You! *You!*" he repeated in rising voice. "It's always of yourself you're thinkin', Dan Sullivan!" He stopped, his face twitching in pain; then with both hands clenched he went on, his breast heaving at each word hurled at Dan:

"Do you think I followed you from ship to ship, dragged you out of every rum-hole in every port, for your own sake!"

He lay back exhausted, his chest rising and falling painfully, his eyelids fluttering over his burning eyes.

Dan stepped back, and, silenced, stared at the dying man.

Larry clung to his last moments of life, fighting for strength to finish. He struggled, and raised himself on one elbow.

"For you!" he screamed. "No, for Mary! For Mary, my own flesh and blood — Mary, the child of the woman I beat when I was drunk an' left to starve when I got ready!"

Through the stateroom door the sun's flat rays struck full on Larry's inspired face. He swayed on his elbow; his head fell forward. By a final effort he steadied himself. His last words came in ringing command.

"Go back! Go" — he faltered, gasping for breath — "go home sober to Mary an' the child that's comin'!"

The fire of anger drifted slowly from Larry's dying gaze. The little man fell back. The Bunker Mouse went out, all man, big at the end.

FREDERICK STUART GREENE

FREDERICK STUART GREENE is a Virginian, born in Rappahannock County in 1870. He was educated at the Virginia Military Institute from which he was graduated in 1890. By profession and practice he is a civil engineer. The first forty-four years of his life were occupied with varied engineering interests, river and harbor work, railroad engineering, superintendency of a large dock building firm, pursuits seemingly far removed from the writing of stories. In 1914 his destiny triumphed, and he published in the *Saturday Evening Post* his first story, *Stictuit*, an account from life of the building of a home on Long Island. Since then Mr. Greene, while still actively continuing his profession, has been a frequent contributor to such magazines as *The Century*, *The Metropolitan*, and *McClure's*. *The Cat of the Cane-brake* was among O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1916*. Mr. Greene served with honor as lieutenant-colonel in the World War, and saw active service in the Oise, Aisne, and Argonne offensives. He is now Superintendent of Public Works of the State of New York.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Were you surprised at Larry's disclosure at the end? Re-read the story and note the hints which the author gives us. Compare this story with other stories having surprise endings, notably those by O. Henry.
2. Tell the story of Larry's many sacrifices for Dan; of his last great sacrifice. For whom was he doing all this? Why? Does Dan really send money to Mary by Larry? Why does Dan never really strike Larry? Has the author any purpose in bringing out this point? How do you feel about the possibility of Dan's reformation? What chance of happiness has Mary? What feeling causes Larry to do all he can for Mary? Why does he not tell her who he is?
3. Read again the splendid description of the storm at sea. In most sea stories our point of view is that of some one on

deck. Note how completely the author succeeds in identifying us with the stokers in the hold. Where is your suspense greatest in this story?

4. Compression of detail is a necessity with the writer of short stories. There is material for a story in the experience of Mary and her mother before coming to this country, or in Larry's discovery of Mary a year before the story begins. Try one of these as a theme subject.

Good sea stories:

On the Fever Ship — Richard Harding Davis
Youth — Joseph Conrad
Typhoon — Joseph Conrad
Making Port — Richard Matthews Hallet
The Trawler — James B. Connolly
The Truth about the Oliver Cromwell — James B. Connolly
Davy Jones's Gift — John Masefield
The Brute — Joseph Conrad

OLD ELIZABETH

By HUGH WALPOLE

The Hargreaves lived at No. 4 Montpellier Square, Edinburgh. Mr. Hargreaves was a widower, and he had one son, Philip, aged thirty-two, and a daughter, Margaret, thirty. They were all three of them tall, big-boned, fair, and silent. Although they lived in Edinburgh, they were not Scotch, but came from the English Lake District near Keswick, and although they were North Country people, they had some of that reticence and reserve which an Englishman so often develops in Scotland, as though he had not forgotten that he was within the gates of his ancient enemies.

Mr. Hargreaves, whose business had been something to do with textiles, was now retired, and his two great interests in life were in prints and golf. To look at the big, broad-shouldered, sandy-haired man with the rather dour, expressionless face and the big, clumsy hands, you would never have supposed that he could look so tenderly upon his Leperes and Hadens when he took them out of their solander boxes, but he would say grimly that prints were his only weakness, and indeed it was hard to detect any other. His son and daughter were as dour as himself. The girl was tender-hearted enough, but her mother having died when she was only a small child, she had been brought up in the grim companionship of her two men folk, and had learned long ago that enthusiasm and emotion and sentiment were weaknesses that didn't belong to the Hargreaves. Philip, the boy, was in some business connected with insurance, and you'd have said that that business was his god. He showed no symptoms of interest in anything else whatever. He spoke very little at any time, but when he did speak, it was to the effect that the business

was doing this, that or the other, and if it did badly, he just shut his mouth and looked like a graven image, and if it did well, he went out and played golf with his father, although he cared very little for the game.

The house, like other houses, resembled the people who lived in it. It was thick and gray, standing at a corner of the Square, beaten upon by all the winds of Edinburgh, and what winds those can be any one who has stayed in Edinburgh for even a week will know. Within, the house was scrupulously neat; everything was in its place, no picture hung crooked on its cord, no rug turned up a friendly corner, no newspaper slipped to the floor and rested there in happy *déshabillé*. On the walls hung some of Mr. Hargreaves' choicest prints, but even such charming, intimate, personal things as Whistler's "Little Mast," or Rembrandt's "Three Cottages," or Bone's "Clare Market" seemed to lose their personality in those rooms. The furniture was splendid and massive and impersonal. You never heard any one singing in the house or laughing or crying, it was the abode of decorous, sensible, honest living into which the emotions dared not break.

Margaret Hargreaves, who was pretty in a fair, large, smooth way and might have been married if men had not been afraid of her, approached more nearly to emotion in her attention to the servant question than in any other of her day-by-day experiences. It was no light matter to run that house as it ought to be run, and every one knows what modern servants are. Scottish servants are better than most, but they are independent of mind and body: the old ones are apt to be proud and haughty and intolerant of rebuke, and the young ones, as the world over to-day, want holidays and fun and constant change of occupation. They were accustomed to sober, honest, God-fearing families in Edinburgh, but also to Scottish humor and democratic good-fellowship. They found often enough that the Hargreaves' atmosphere of almost inhuman detachment was almost more than they could bear, and al-

though the Hargreaves' wages were good and the work was not over severe, they were always departing on one ground or another. Margaret could not understand why they would not stay, and the servants themselves frequently could not understand. They had excellent bedrooms, admirable food, and plenty of leisure, but they disliked Mr. Hargreaves Senior's eye, and the way Mr. Hargreaves Junior would brush past them as though they were chairs or tables.

Mr. Hargreaves sometimes complained to his daughter that he could not understand why it was that Margaret could not keep servants, and he would threaten to bring in a housekeeper, but of course he never did. He was proud of Margaret in his heart, but he would have been covered with shame had he allowed her to perceive it.

Old Elizabeth would never have entered the house had not Margaret on a certain occasion been in desperate difficulty. There was to be a little dinner party to some business friends, and of course the housemaid, irritated by some quick, sharp rebuke from Mr. Hargreaves, had left in a temper that very afternoon. Margaret, in despair, had run round to the servants' agency in George Street with the hope of finding something temporary that would do. What she did find was Elizabeth. On the face of it, Elizabeth was absurd. She was well over sixty, a little, thin woman of no physique, and confessed at once, with a pathetic eagerness to be honest, that she was a little deaf. She looked a very decent old woman sitting there in the agency, clad in rather faded black and wearing an old-fashioned black hat that was a good deal too large for her small, wrinkled face. Margaret found to her surprise that she was English: what she was doing in Edinburgh she didn't explain; her last place had been at York.

"I am very strong, mum," she said in a thin, bright voice that had something lively, but distant and remote, in it, like a note on a spinet. "You mightn't think it to look at me, but I am every bit as strong as I was thirty years ago.

There's nothing wrong with me except my deafness, and I don't think you'll find that much of a trouble, because you've a nice, clear voice, mum, if you don't mind my saying so."

She was scrupulously clean, and if any one in this world ever looked honest to the core, she did. Her face, too, had a nice, ruddy-brown color that spoke of good health and good temper. She was trembling with eagerness to be engaged, and Margaret, who was in real truth soft-hearted and even a little sentimental, engaged her.

The little woman's face was all smiles. "I'm sure you'll be satisfied, miss," she said, having suddenly discovered apparently that Margaret was not married. "I'm not afraid of any amount of work, and I never fall sick."

"What are you doing up here in Edinburgh?" Margaret asked her.

The old, wrinkled face saddened. "My husband died six months ago here," she said. "I left my last place and came to be with him here; it seems to me more homelike now than anywhere else."

She went off to her lodging to fetch her things.

She could not be said to be a great success at the dinner that night. She was nervous, of course, and so eager to please that she confused the young parlor maid, appeared at the door at the wrong moments, and was heard loudly to exclaim to herself on one occasion,

"Dear, dear, I shouldn't have done that, I shouldn't have done that!"

Mr. Hargreaves raised his eyebrows in ironic question to his daughter once or twice during the meal, and when the guests had gone, Philip said to his sister,

"My dear Margaret, where did you find that old scarecrow?"

Margaret, who had been worried by the evening, replied with more impatience than any Hargreaves was expected to show. "It's all very well, Philip, for you to talk, but if you had the running of this house, you would be at your

wits' end. It's more your and father's fault than mine. Yes, father, it's all very well to look at me like that, but why did you choose the very day we're giving a party to be rude to Alice?"

Mr. Hargreaves, standing in front of the fire with his hands in his pockets, answered quietly. "Rude to Alice, my dear — what do you mean?"

"Well, you know you were. You spoke to her about the hot water or something; she said your manner to her was most insulting. You know they won't stand it up here. It's easy to be polite to them."

Philip laughed. "If I were in their place," he said, "I would not bother about politeness. I would want a decent room to sleep in, good food, time to myself, decent wages, and to be allowed to do my work in peace. If they don't get those things here, Margaret, then it's your fault."

"They *do* get them," she answered irritably," but they're flesh and blood just as we are, and they want to be treated like human beings. It isn't a case of master and servant any more, these days; we are all working together under the same roof at our different jobs. There is something inhuman about us," she burst out. "How many real friends do we ever make here? You've been here for years, Philip, and you haven't an intimate friend in the place."

Father and son looked at her with surprise; she was nearer tears than they had ever seen her before; there was a dangerous threat of emotion in the air. They were all frightened by it, and avoided it skilfully.

That little conversation that evening marked something of a crisis in the family. They were not accustomed to thinking very much about one another, but after that evening they began considering one another furtively, and from that consideration Margaret at least passed to thoughts about their life in Edinburgh and why it wasn't more satisfactory, why there wasn't more warmth and color and friendship in it. The funny old woman now in the house had some effect on her. She was, of course, to be there

but a week or two, until somebody else should be found, but this was quite plainly not her own idea.

On the morning following the dinner party Margaret went up to Elizabeth's room to see that she had everything she wanted, and in spite of herself was touched by the things Elizabeth had arranged there. On the chest of drawers, in a large, very ugly plush frame, was a photograph of Elizabeth's departed husband, the late Mr. Cummings. He was a neat, timid, pathetic-looking little man in his photograph, staring forward anxiously as though he were begging the photographer not to be unkind to him. There was something very attractive about his face, Margaret thought; he looked a kind, little old man, and Elizabeth must miss him very much. There were also a couple of large sea-shells, a green plush box with a colored photograph of Brighton in the middle of it, and a small photograph in a neat, black frame of a thin, wizened-looking little baby holding a toy horse.

"You see, mum," Elizabeth commented rather nervously, "I wanted to have a few of my things about me, and I do hope that you don't mind."

"Mind!" said Margaret gently. "No, of course not. Was that your husband?"

"Yes, it was," said Elizabeth, "— or is, I should properly say, because he's up in heaven now, looking just the same and a lot brighter than he was in those last weeks when he was so poorly."

"And was that your baby?" Margaret asked.

"Yes, miss." Elizabeth paused for a moment. "One year old and three days when it died. That's thirty years ago now, and I never had another. It was a sweet little thing, and my John was terribly set on it. He did love children and was always running after his nephews and nieces. Well, well," she smiled brightly, "I've a lot to be thankful for, the Lord knows; things are always turning up, miss, in a way you wouldn't believe. There I was yesterday, feeling rather down-hearted I won't deny, and

you come along and offer me a place that's just the sort of home I was looking for. Why, miss," she glanced proudly around her room, "I can settle down here perfectly; it reminds me more than any place I've been in since, of the room I had when I was quite a girl and was Lady Dunthorpe's maid. Of course, that was the old Lady Dunthorpe, she's been dead many a year, and the present Lady Dunthorpe's a bit flighty, they tell me. But there, one mustn't believe what one hears, and anyway I must be getting on with my work."

And with a little smile of a confiding but entirely unpresuming kind she hurried off.

No, this was not at all what Margaret had intended. She had made it perfectly plain to the old thing, when she engaged her, that this was only to be a temporary affair, until she found some one better suited. How could any one so old and feeble as Elizabeth expect to do her duties efficiently? That was a house in which everything must be in perfect order, absolute punctuality was insisted on, and of course, an old thing like that would be always late with everything; the stairs alone would be too much for her. But here came surprise number one. Elizabeth was punctuality in person; from the moment when she brought Mr. Hargreaves his morning tea at half-past seven, to the carrying in of the whiskey and soda-water at ten o'clock in the evening, everything was up to time.

It was, indeed, like many other Edinburgh houses of the old type, a terrible place for stairs, a thin, bony house with many floors. Elizabeth climbed them as though they were nothing at all, and if her knees ached, she never said anything to anybody about it.

Surprise number two, that she got on astonishingly well with the other servants. Margaret had never before known such peace downstairs, and the other servants stayed as they had never done.

Surprise number three was a little more confusing in its results than the other two. This was that Elizabeth in-

sisted on considering the Hargreaves family as the most amiable, sentimental, and even emotional persons that she had ever yet encountered. When she had been with them several weeks, she astonished Margaret by saying to her;

"Do you know, Miss Margaret, what's the matter with your father?"

"Matter with my father?" repeated Margaret astonished. "I didn't know anything was the matter with him. He's particularly well just now."

"Oh, I didn't mean his health, Miss Margaret," Elizabeth answered almost scornfully. "It's his good nature I'm meaning. He's always thinking of others. He can't see any one unhappy without its upsetting him."

"He *is* very good-natured," agreed Margaret who, loving her father, had yet never considered him in that light before.

"Why, only yesterday," continued Elizabeth, "I said something to him about Mary" (Mary was the parlor-maid) "and the bad dreams she keeps having, and he was terribly concerned. I wasn't thinking of worrying him about it, but he takes everybody's troubles as though they were his own."

She said to Philip one day: "Now, Mr. Philip, just you give me that other suit of clothes of yours; there's a spot or two I noticed. I know you don't want to give it to me lest you should be making extra trouble. You think of others too much, sir, if I may say so."

And she confided to Margaret: "I do like to hear Mr. Philip's laugh. Indeed, miss, this is the most cheerful house I ever was in."

In any case she stayed. Her busy little figure could be seen hurrying up and down the house at all hours of the day. It was true that she made mistakes, that she forgot things, that she didn't always hear when she was spoken to, and in the very impetuosity of her good will went sometimes too far, but these things could be forgiven her; she had become an institution.

When she had been with them about three years, she caught a bad cold. She was forced very much against her own wish to go to bed, and there she was for a week. This was terrible to her. She could be seen sitting up in bed, very neat and tidy, her gray hair parted, a shawl over her shoulders, large spectacles on the end of her nose, reading her Bible, but beneath this outward calm there was a desperate sense that the whole of the household was going to ruin without her; that the other servants were all over the place; and she would lie there straining her ears for sounds, hearing imaginary plates crash to the ground, and sniffing with terrible distress meals overcooked and all kinds of possible conflagrations.

She pulled through and came downstairs again, but it was obvious to every one that she was not as she had been. She was much deafer than before, she could not see very well in spite of her spectacles, and, do what she would, her knees failed her at the stairs. What a panic there must have been then in her old heart! This was her last place, and she knew it. She had not a penny in the whole world besides what she earned, she had not a friend anywhere, her relations had long forgotten her, she was prouder than Lucifer. She could not but know that she was now not up to her work; she must have risen on those cold, dark Edinburgh mornings with an agonizing fear lest some catastrophe should occur before the night. She was passionately eager that they should not discover her increasing deafness; she pretended to hear when she did not, and gave the most surprising answers to unexpected questions.

One day she dropped a valuable piece of china and broke it, and it seemed to her that the end of the world had come. On this occasion a surprising thing occurred. The parlormaid, Mary, who was an ordinary, phlegmatic, not very imaginative girl, went to Margaret and said that she herself had broken it. Elizabeth, of course, instantly told the truth, and then went up to her room and, for the first time in the Hargreaves' household, cried bitterly.

Margaret, who had changed considerably during the last three years, did not know what to do. How could they turn the old woman out? And yet things could not go on as they were. It was true that her father and brother had become quite fond of the old thing, but a servant was a servant to them, and Margaret perceived that her father was growing more and more irritated as the days passed and unpunctuality and disorder increased.

"Look here, Margaret," he said to his daughter one evening, "what are you going to do about your precious Elizabeth? She's past her work, doesn't hear a word I say. Besides that, it's positive cruelty to force her up and down these stairs; she's got to go."

Margaret's heart sank. She was surprised at her own feeling. It was as though some sudden misfortune had happened to herself; it was as though she had to lose unexpectedly some one who was near and dear to her. She had not a great deal of imagination, but in a flash of vision she saw the house without Elizabeth, lacking some vital, friendly quality that had come into it with her presence. That did not mean that she had not been irritated by Elizabeth over and over again, that she had not herself said many times lately, "Yes, she must go, she must go, she's ruining the house." But when her father spoke, it was as though the old woman had come into the room and stood there with her funny little body, her thin, hard-worked hands folded in front of her, and her old, wrinkled face raised up beseechingly to hers.

"That's all very well, father," she said. "I realize it as clearly as you, but what are we to do? She has no home, no friends, no money. She'll never get another place. She's proud and won't take charity. We can't turn her right adrift."

He frowned. "Well," he said, "things can't go on as they are."

Then, a week later, the catastrophe occurred.

One morning Mr. Hargreaves came abruptly out of his

study and turned toward the staircase. At that very moment, by an unhappy chance, Elizabeth had rested for a moment a scuttle full of coal at the foot of the staircase. She was talking to herself, "Now just a moment, my dear, and I'll have you up the stairs as right as rain," but unfortunately Mr. Hargreaves ran straight into the coal-scuttle, gave his leg a sharp and very unpleasant jar, and tumbled forward on to the staircase. He rose in a fury; nothing can rouse the temper more quickly than that sharp, sudden pain of the shin bone.

Elizabeth, not seeing exactly what had occurred, hurried foward with an "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" and he turned full upon her.

"Do you see what you've done?" he shouted at her, pointing to the coal scattered on the carpet. "What do you go and leave a thing like that there for?"

He was nursing his leg with one hand as he spoke; the pain was very sharp. "Didn't know you had left it there, I suppose! The fact is you're past your work and have been for a long time. I'm afraid you'll have to leave us; you've done well, you are a good worker, and it isn't your fault that this house is too much for you. Miss Margaret will speak to you about it."

And so he went hopping up the stairs.

The blow had fallen. She stood there gazing about her, then fell down on her knees and began in a fumbling sort of way to put some of the bigger pieces of coal back in the scuttle. A tear trickled down one cheek, and she brushed it impatiently with the back of her hand, leaving a smudgy mark of coal there. This was the end, the end of her life.

It need not have been the end had it not been for the Hargreaves character, which was such that as a thing was said so it remained. By the time he had reached the next floor the pain in his leg had greatly diminished, and he was already repentant, but the matter was done; no Hargreaves could go back on his word.

"I am very sorry, Margaret," he said five minutes later.

"I've given your Elizabeth notice; couldn't stand her incompetence any longer. Deal with her generously, won't you?"

Deal with her generously! Here was one of those occasions when people who live together and love one another very dearly have a sudden impulse of real and almost passionate hatred. Treat her generously! The men of her family were hard, mean, grasping creatures; Margaret hated the lot of them. Again she felt as though some tragic loss had occurred in her own life; she would have gone, had years of training not prevented her, and put her arms round the old woman and kissed her. But Elizabeth needed no sentimental pity. When Margaret spoke to her, she looked at her bravely and said in a tone of almost casual matter-of-fact:

"Your father is wrong, Miss Margaret, if he thinks I can't manage the work of the house, but he knows what he wants, and he must have his way. I shouldn't wonder if he wasn't thinking of me a little, too, fancying that these stairs tire me more than they do."

"And what will you do; where will you go?" Margaret asked.

"Oh, I'm all right Miss Margaret," Elizabeth answered quite gaily. "I've a little apartment I've been keeping with the things that I had when I was married. I'll be very comfortable indeed, thank you, miss."

And so she went off in her black hat too big for her, and her shiny tin box, in which, of course, was the photo of Mr. Cummings deceased, the two sea-shells, the plush present from Brighton, and the baby with the toy horse.

Margaret was unhappy and uneasy as she had never been before. The thought of Elizabeth would not let her rest. She seemed also to be on strange, new terms with her brother and father; she felt that they had both of them been in this affair callous and unkind. They made no inquiries about the old woman, and her father offered no suggestion of helping her out with money. It was true

that Elizabeth was proud, but still something might have been arranged. Margaret was disappointed in her family; she knew that they were unsentimental and hated to show their feelings, but in this present case the old woman had seemed, Margaret thought, to pervade the whole house with her presence. She had fancied sometimes, during these three years, fantastic as the idea might be, that old Elizabeth had affected her father and brother. Philip had fallen into the habit of laughing with the old woman, chaffing with her and listening to her stories, and Margaret had thought on one or two occasions that she had heard her father laughing in a way most unusual to him. And then that they should let her go without a word to absolute penury and friendlessness! No, Margaret was not proud of her men.

Very soon her conscience would not let her rest, and she hunted Elizabeth out. When she arrived at the room at last, down the hill in Leith Walk, she was agreeably surprised. The room was small, it was true, but it was very much better furnished than she had expected. There were cheerful things about, including, of course, the two sea-shells and the plush box, and there was a large bowl filled with fresh flowers. Moreover Elizabeth herself was in excellent spirits and looking very well. She was no more the servant, but a very independent old lady wearing a lace cap, her spectacles on the end of her nose, and a very handsome and certainly expensive white shawl over her shoulders. Margaret, in fact, felt to her surprise rather as though she had come to call on an elderly and very respectable relation. She sat down, refused tea, then most tactfully explained how glad she was to see Elizabeth so comfortable, and asked her if there was anything more that she needed.

"Well, no, Miss Margaret," Elizabeth said, "I can't say that there is. I am very comfortable indeed, thank you. Of course, I missed the work at first, but there's a lot of knitting to be done, and I do my own little bits of shop-

ping and such like, and I've a friend or two comes in to see me."

Margaret was surprised at that. She had thought that the old lady hadn't a friend in the place. She was altogether very greatly relieved; she did not feel now nearly so guilty. She stayed a long time, Elizabeth had so many amusing stories of past days, former mistresses, pictures of an old world now dead and gone.

"I will come and see you next week," Margaret said as she stood up to go. "Is there any day that you prefer?"

"Well, Thursday afternoon's a good day," Elizabeth said. "I've a friend comes to see me on Tuesdays, and Saturday's busy like; come on Thursday, Miss Margaret, do."

She came on the following Thursday, and many Thursdays after that, and soon it became quite the regular thing for her to spend an hour there. She brought flowers and things to eat, and Elizabeth was always delighted, but there was no sense at all of benefits conferred; the relation of mistress and servant was quite gone.

Those weekly visits did the girl all the good in the world; she caught from old Elizabeth's spirit a sense of kindliness and good humor, of courage and optimism, that was now become part of her own character. She looked at life differently, and soon somebody detected in her this new spirit, and new possibilities of fresh happiness opened in front of her. Old Elizabeth soon guessed this, asked her questions, and in a short time became her principal confidante.

All this time Margaret was puzzled by the things that she found in Elizabeth's room, by the comfort and ease of everything. The old lady must have been false in that at least; she must have saved in the past; there must be a stocking well filled in some corner.

Then one fine spring afternoon somebody asked a question, and Margaret answered it in the affirmative. Happy as she had never been in her life before, and almost dizzy

with her happiness, she hurried round to Elizabeth to tell her. She opened the door without knocking and then stood transfixed. There, on the chair close to the old lady, was seated her brother reading the newspaper aloud, while Elizabeth sat there knitting, nodding her head once and again to what she heard.

"Philip!" Margaret cried.

He sprang to his feet, confused, blushing like a boy.

"But you!" she exclaimed, moving into the room. "I hadn't an idea."

"And you," he answered laughing, dropping the paper.

"Why didn't you tell me?" she asked.

He mumbled something, then stammered, "Well, if you must know, I thought you'd laugh."

Elizabeth, very much at her ease, said, looking up at them as though they were her own children: "Yes, and he's been coming once a week just as you have, Miss Margaret. He asked me not to say anything, and so, of course, I didn't. Very kind he's been, reading me the news, very kind indeed."

She laughed at both of them.

Philip was quite sulky; he would scarcely speak a word to her on the way home, and she didn't tell him her own fine secret. Only he implored her again and again:

"You won't tell father, will you, Margaret? He'd think me such a fool, but she's a nice old woman. Upon my soul I'm getting quite fond of her; she's so amusing, got such a lot of funny stories — but you won't tell father, will you?"

"And I suppose it's you who have been giving her all those fine things," she asked him.

"Oh, nothing very much," he answered, more confused than ever. "Just once and again something I thought she'd like."

And there began between them from that moment an entirely new relationship. They wondered, indeed, that they could have lived all those years together and known

each other so little. There were so many things in Philip's character that Margaret had never suspected; they had jokes together now, and intimacies and secrets. Margaret's engagement was announced; her father gave his consent with a reluctance, with that same dry terror of emotion, that always seemed to keep him apart from the rest of the world. He was most certainly a lonely man, and Margaret, now that she was going off into this splendid new life of her own, felt a great tenderness for him, a longing to get close to him, but she was afraid just as she had always been.

One stormy afternoon in the early autumn, when the rain was being driven round the gray corners by a proper Edinburgh wind, Margaret whispered to Philip!

"What an awful afternoon! Let's go and see Elizabeth."

"All right," he whispered back to her, looking with a sort of humorous conspirator's air across at their father, who was at the other side of the room. "I can't be free till four; will it be all right then?"

"Perfectly," she said. "That will just suit me."

She fought her way through the rain, met her brother at the top of the Walk. They battled down the hill together, up the stairs, and with a cry of "Here we are again, Elizabeth," burst open the door.

The door banged to behind them, and then they had to cling to each other to recover from their amazement. In that same chair that they both knew so well, looking as though he had spent the whole of his life there, reading the newspaper aloud just as they had both done, was their father. He had been caught, you would have supposed, in the very act of some terrible and heinous crime. He did not move, he only stared at them, then jumped to his feet with an angry "Well, I'm damned."

Elizabeth was entirely unmoved. She went on with her knitting, only remarking quietly to the world in general, "Well, it had to happen sometime, didn't it?" Then,

turning to the confused man, "I told you you'd be found out, sir; it wasn't natural to keep it from your own children."

There was nothing to be said; he had been going there, of course, from the very beginning and been giving her things, reading to her, listening to her stories, laughing with her, enjoying himself, it may be, as he enjoyed himself nowhere else. No, there was nothing to be said.

Afterward the three of them walked away together, and an odd walk home it was. It was of no use for him to put up the barriers again; he had been found out, and in his turn had discovered them, also. They were all in the family guilty together.

"Well, you see," he explained at dinner that night, "it was all my fault giving her notice like that. To tell you the truth, I got quite fond of the old thing while she was here. I suppose you think," turning round fiercely upon his son and daughter, "that I've got no natural feelings. Well, if you do, I dare say it's my own fault. That old woman's got more sense of fun in her than all the rest of you put together."

They had the merriest evening of their lives upstairs that night. As Margaret was on her way to bed, along the silent passage she seemed to see a little figure flitting, and a humorous, almost teasing, little voice seemed to whisper in her ear,

"You wanted showing to one another and there was nobody but myself to do it."

HUGH WALPOLE

An American writer, Charles Hanson Towne, meeting Hugh Walpole in London during the last years of the World War, described him as a young man having a "strong, lusty, boyish face, with eyes a little vague behind big tortoise-shell glasses; the kind of man you would be sure to pick out in any gathering." Although ten years have brought their toll of experience and physical change since then, they have brought to Hugh

Walpole no ageing of the spirit; he is youthful still in his zest for life, his devotion to an ideal of beauty, his passionate enthronement of courage as the primal virtue. He was born in New Zealand in 1884, and educated at King's School, Canterbury, England, and at Cambridge University. After several years spent in journalistic work in London, he was enabled through the remarkable success of his fifth novel, *Fortitude*, to devote himself entirely to writing. War service in Russia occupied him until 1918. Since then he has lived in Keswick, England, in the beautiful Wordsworth country, and has written novels which place him high in rank among English writers. He is primarily a novelist rather than a writer of short stories, and likes to bind together even his stories by some common background or basic idea. Two such collections of stories are *The Golden Windmill* and *The Thirteen Travellers*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. There is a fairy tale about the magic touch which bestowed power to look beneath the physical exterior and into the soul. Perhaps Old Elizabeth had felt this magic; perhaps, because of this, she could read the unselfish impulses behind the surly, uncommunicative exterior of the elder Mr. Hargreaves. Faith is the key which unlocks the secret places of our souls. We all want to be believed in; let a friend but say, "How splendidly you carry yourself!" and at once we throw back our shoulders and affect a more soldierly stride. How do the last words of the story emphasize this thought?
2. A house usually expresses the personality of those who live in it. How does Mr. Walpole suggest this in his description of the Hargreaves home in Montpellier Square? Find in this or other stories good bits of description such as "a thin, bony house with many floors."
3. In which other stories in this collection do we notice "the reticence and reserve" of the Englishman? Why was it that servants in the Hargreaves family "were always departing on one ground or another?" Were they not well treated? How did it happen that Old Elizabeth stayed on? Had Margaret intended this? Can you explain what prompted Mary, the parlormaid, "to take upon her-

self the blame for the broken china?" Note that Mary was "an ordinary, phlegmatic, not very imaginative girl."

4. After Elizabeth leaves the Hargreaves, let us imagine that an old friend comes to visit her, one who had also been Lady Dunthorpe's maid in England. Write in narrative or dramatic form the account of her visit. Have Elizabeth tell her of the three members of the Hargreaves family and of their secret visits to her. If you choose the dramatic form, note in your stage directions the description of Old Elizabeth's room. What treasures has she brought with her? Where are they placed? Give directions also for her costume and for that of her visitor.

Other Short Stories by Hugh Walpole:

Mr. Oddy
Miss Finchley's Hour
The Girl Who Was Herself
Bachelors
Major Wilbrahan
The Thirteen Travellers
The Golden Scarecrow
Jeremy

THE MILL ON THE RIVER

By KONRAD BERCOVICI

It was an old mill, Dimitru's mill on the Bistritza river. It had been run by the family of Dimitru long before any other mills had ever been put up on either side of the river, all through the Moldava country. The dykes and the water wheels were of old oak, cut from trees in the forest when the country paid yearly tribute to Turkey and was ruled by the Fanariots of Stamboul.

Within the mill were fifty pairs of millstones which, grinding wheat and corn, had themselves been ground so thin that they had no weight to mill any more the hard grain growing in that part of Rumania. These old millstones were the pride of the family, for not another mill in the country could show so many.

When anybody said anything about Dimitru's mill or the manner in which he milled, the tall, black-bearded, wide-chested, brown-eyed miller would stretch to his full height, and pounding the left side of his chest with his right hand, he would cry:

"Look at these stones! Fifty pair of stones have ground flour in this mill. I myself have used five pair. This is the sixth one on the shaft."

Those millstones were like arms of the escutcheon of a nobleman, which no man was allowed to impugn.

At the inn Dimitru was looked upon with respect by the peasants. He was one of the oldest inhabitants of the village. Indeed, the village itself, clustered as it was about the mill, was known as Dimitru's Mill Village. For not only did they mill flour there, but they cut logs that were let down from the heights of the Carpathians early every spring, and they pressed oil out of pumpkin seeds, and carded wool, and even worked things out at a lathe which

Dimitru himself had installed there; at first merely to satisfy a whim he had had after he had first seen a lathe work in another village, and then, as he grew more proficient, to make furniture for most of the people in the village. Back of the mill there was a shop in which carts and wheels were made, and chairs and tables; and even small husking machines, patterned after one that had been bought in Austria. The water wheel provided the power for all the work.

The inn, the church, the school, the mayor's office, the situation of every building was reckoned by its distance from the mill. During the winter, when there was only little work to do, the elders of the village would assemble in the mill, and watching the still in which the mash of plums and pears, grown in the neighborhood, was distilled into spirits, watching the drops fall into the receptacle that sat under the long copper worm, they would tell the tales they had heard from their mothers and grandmothers, who in turn had heard them from their parents and grandparents — stories of visitations of wolves; tales of sorceries, of witches which had risen up riding in the air on broomsticks, and of horses that could run so fast they disappeared from sight in less time than it takes to blink an eye. They recalled the different battles — battles with the Turks, battles with the Russians, battles with the Hungarians; births of five-legged calves and two-headed chickens, and the reappearances of deceased men whose ghosts were forever roaming about this, that, and the other place.

Dimitru repeated an old tale of his own family, of how the stones of his mill had stopped once by themselves while some corn was being ground. From behind the stones groaned a voice which was recognized as being the voice of Vasili, Vasili Yoan Stefans, who had died only a few months before.

"Mill not this corn," the voice had called. "It has been stolen from my granary by Panait, the Greek.

Give it back to my wife lest my children starve, this winter."

The millstones refused to budge or turn until every grain of flour which had already been ground was swept out clean and returned to the bag from which the corn had been taken. And even then the stones would not move, although the water wheel turned and everything else was in motion. The wool was being carded, the logs were being sawn; only the millstones refused to turn. Not until the widow had been called and the corn belonging to her had been returned, and not until Panait had confessed to stealing the grain, had the stones turned again.

And there were many tales, similar to that one, centered about the mill. For the mill had also refused to grind grain when the Russians had invaded the country a century ago, and had refused to grind when the Turks had come. It was the mill on the Bistritza, which ground wheat and corn, and pressed oil and sawed logs and turned the lathe only for those belonging to the land. And Dimitru was the owner of that mill.

Dimitru had a son, and a daughter whom he had married off when very young. The son, like all the sons back in the family, was preparing himself to take over the mill of his father when the time should come. For even if he were to take a wife while his father was yet alive, there was enough room for him and his wife in the house. And even if he were to raise a family, there was enough room and enough field for him to pasture his dowry of cows and sheep, and to raise enough fodder for them. He had indeed already taken off a good deal of the burden of his father, for while the old man busied himself with his cart shop, preferring the lathe to the mill, George was in complete charge of the stones. And he was as good a miller as his father.

But although he joked and played around with most of the young girls who came to the mill, although he danced with all of them at the inn, teasing, singing, joking with

them, there was not one who could say that he was giving her preference over the others. Tall, dark, with big brown eyes, the lashes of which were always covered with a thin white powder, the dark, tufty brows looking like those of an old man because of a fine flour powder always on them, he was a good dancer, and his voice rose above the voices of the others when any singing was being done at the inn. At the wrestling matches on Sunday there were few youngsters who dared to match him. And he was gay and always happy. And it was known that although he was allowed to take one tenth of the flour he milled, in payment for milling it, from everybody, he took only half that amount, and sometimes not even that, from the poor and the widows of the country. Indeed, many a widow had brought half a bag of corn and returned home with a full bag of corn flour, George yelling at the top of his voice, when the widow claimed there had been some mistake, that he was an honest miller.

"You have brought one bag of corn and not two, widow of Jorga," he would silence the protesting woman, not giving her any chance or time to explain herself.

"You have brought one bag, and I know you have brought only one bag! Am I a miller, or a thief, or what!" he would shout, and show great anger, as he would push her out of the mill.

One winter night, while the wind was howling, and the water wheel, raised from the frozen river, was squeaking and groaning, and the storm was beating savagely against the windows and doors of the mill, one of the villagers sitting about the walled-in stove, in the ashes of which the potatoes were being baked, asked:

"George, whom are you going to marry?"

Dimitru gave his son no time to answer. "He will marry the one who will bring him a good enough dowry," he answered, instead of his son.

One by one they passed in review all the marriageable daughters of the village. They knew all of them. And

when Dimitru had shaken his head to the last one, the *staroste*, trembling and with shaking fists, thundered into the face of the man:

"Is it, then, the death of one of the married men that you are waiting for, to marry your son?"

George had been making fun of all that was said. He had taken it all as a joke. But to the thundering voice of the *staroste* he replied:

"I wish every one long life in this village, and in every other one. When I am ready to marry, I shall make my own choice."

"Indeed, my son wants to get married to some pauper. I have given six pair of oxen as dowry to my daughter, six pair of oxen and one hundred gold pieces. But he may want to marry some pauper!"

"A time will come," George answered. "My time will come. But it shall be of my own choice, not of anybody else's."

"Well said," spoke the gray-bearded *staroste*.

Old Dimitru remained silent.

Then they all sat down to sample the new prune juice that was dripping from the copper worm. It was better that such discussion end in joy, so they sang their saddest songs.

Finally George remarked, on looking toward the idle stones, "It is a pity they should be idle so long."

George was never happy but when the stones turned around.

"This is a water mill," his father answered. "When the Bistritza freezes, the mill freezes."

"I know, father." He was a miller and lived only when the mill lived. "But it is a pity that the stones should not be turning when the Bistritza freezes."

"If it were a windmill, you would be saying half the time the same thing," another man of the group mused.

"If it were a horse mill, the mill would not be turning at night," another man said in jest.

Whereupon one of the men, who had served in the army, and had been far away in a large city, began to speak about a large, steam-power mill which he had seen on his travels. A steam mill. One prepared logs to fire the engine during the summer, and then in winter one had the mill go whether the river was frozen or not.

George mused impatiently, "What a pity the Bistritza freezes!"

During the first month of the winter, after the river had frozen, he had had some work to do. He had sharpened every tooth and smoothed out the grain of the stones, until the teeth were as sharp as steel edges. He had cleaned and adjusted and readjusted everything. He had made it all ready to go, and now he was anxious to hear the whirl and turn of the mill, grinding and crunching all that was shoved into it.

"What a pity the Bistritza freezes!"

His father looked at him and then replied: "It is a thing I am going to put into my will, that this is a water mill and it shall remain so. This mill has ground fifty pair of stones."

George was tired of always hearing the same thing. He left the company to go to his own room above the shaft.

Soon after, the peasants tightened their wolf-fur coats about them and returned to their homes, after wishing one another good luck. It was snowing and storming. Wolves were prowling on the road.

Dimitru still pottered about in the cart shop, working on a new corn-husking machine he was trying to perfect; then, tired, he, too, went to his room, where he lay wondering what was to become of the mill after he was no longer there. Was it to be desecrated? Was it to be forever forgotten as the water mill on the Bistritza? Was all the pride of generations to be sacrificed to that new thing of which the returned soldier had spoken? Outside the wind was howling, the lugubrious plaint of the hungry wolves was coming nearer and nearer, the wheel was creaking on its axle, straining the ropes that held it to the thick iron staples

embedded in the stone of the walls. Whom was that son of his to marry if he wanted to marry of his own choice? It had not been so with him. His father had chosen him a bride, decided on the dowry, and married him off. Yet he had been happy! George should do as he had done. He was the father, the master.... With these thoughts the old man fell asleep.

Early that spring, after the river had broken, and the logs began to descend to the mill, and the wheel had begun again to turn, George, very busy and very happy, forgot all about the frozen months.

At the inn Dan, Petru's son, whose farm was across the river and who was reputed to be very wealthy, came to meet Dimitru, the miller, to talk over matters of matrimony between his daughter Veta and George. After the bottle of wine was between them, Dan opened the conversation.

"There is no other man would offer the dowry I offer. What say you?"

"I say that my son George must receive as much as I have given my daughter as dowry. Six pair of great oxen, one hundred gold pieces, and all the other things."

Dan, red-haired and easily excitable, rose from his chair. "Is my Veta a cripple?"

Dimitru answered calmly: "She is not ... but George is a better man than the one who married my daughter."

They both sat down again. It was not fitting they should be heard quarreling by the others.

"Am I a miller to be able to give such dowry?" Dan remonstrated. Then as an afterthought he added, "One should be able to accumulate wealth by building a mill the other side of the river so people won't have to lose time rowing back and forth."

"The mill is on this side," Dimitru answered. "It is on this side."

"Since millers ask such dowry, it may come to pass that there will be a mill on the other side also."

Upon that the two men left the inn.

On reaching the mill Dimitru asked his son, "What say you about Veta, Dan's daughter?"

George was busy cleaning the flour funnels. He was as if snow-clad. He wiped his face with his sleeve and answered: "It is long since I have seen her. They have their own inn on the other side. I remember her well, however, beautiful and strong."

"You will marry her," Dimitru announced briefly.

"Who says I will?" yelled George. He was furious.

"I say so. I have talked to her father about dowry and things."

"Marry her, then, yourself. I shall do my own choosing when I am ready."

"You will do what I say, George."

"In the mill, because the mill is yours."

"And do you know what will happen if you don't marry Veta? Dan will put up a mill on the other side and starve our stones. Do you understand?"

George paled. But the next instant he stopped the whirr of the mill to be better heard and said to his father:

"Even though she be the fairest on earth, I say 'no.' I am not a horse or an ox to be marketed that way. Let him build ten mills."

Upon that he returned to his work, while the old man muttered, "You will do as I say," and went to his shop.

A few days later bricks were being brought in big carts and deposited on the other side of the river. Bricks and beams and lumber, and gypsies came to dig the foundation of a large building.

Dimitru's heart stopped beating when he saw that Dan really intended to build a mill. He sent word he wanted to speak to him, but Veta's father refused to come. The old miller could not sleep nights, nor could he work at his lathe. The noise of the work across the river maddened him. Another mill was rising. Another mill, and his son seemed not to care. He asked George to go to the dance across

the river and get better acquainted with Veta. . . . The mill had to be stopped. George refused. He would not be traded away. He would take a wife of his own choice, mill or no mill. Veta was out of the question.

When the foundation had risen above a man's height from the ground, Dimitru, compelling his son to come along, rowed across the Bistritza to have a talk with Dan. He found the man busily engaged in giving orders, flushed by the activity about him.

"What is it you are doing, Dan, Petru's son?" Dimitru asked, as if he did not know.

"As you see, my neighbor across the water — putting up a mill for the people on this side of the river, so that they shall not have to row across to your mill."

"But a good half of my milling comes from your side of the river," Dimitru answered.

"That is just why I am putting up the mill," Dan replied sarcastically.

"But this is impossible! My mill has been there for over a hundred years," remonstrated Dimitru. "Are you going to starve the stones?"

"To each one his own way of doing," replied the would-be miller. "But young men demand such dowries, nowadays, they can only be made by milling and not by farming."

"But we have been millers for hundreds of years," Dimitru insisted.

"I hope my grandchildren will be able to say the same thing about this mill," Dan retorted. "Perhaps things will change, and people will begin to row from your side of the river to this mill, for I shall mill cheaper than you do."

"So that is what you want to do," cried Dimitru. "Starve me out!"

"You see," Dan retorted, "I have only daughters in my house. And the young men about this place want big dowries, which only millers can give to their daughters."

While the two men were speaking, Veta, Dan's daughter,

came riding upon a small horse. George raised his fur cap as he saw her, and approached to help her from the saddle. Instantly the two older men looked at each other with a look of understanding. Perhaps the problem was nearer a solution than they had just thought. The conversation between them lost its acridity, as they saw the two youngsters together, Dimitru saying:

"It is not a mill that I should like for my son as dowry. He already has one."

To which Dan answered, "I have not offered the mill as dowry, have I?"

They tried conversation on other subjects, but it always reverted to what one had to offer as dowry, and what the other one would be willing to accept for his son. In the midst of that, Dimitru, having remarked a too great interest in his son for the girl, abruptly decided to leave for the other shore.

"Go on and work your mill, son. This is no time to idle. Come."

"Come dance at our inn," George urged Veta, as he jumped into the boat.

"There is a big dance at our inn to-morrow, Sunday," the girl answered.

Then the oars splashed in the water, and the boat was rowed across with vigorous strokes by father and son.

Late that night, as the two men were anchoring the water wheel over Sunday, the father said to his son:

"I shall ask as dowry that he stop working on his mill."

Instantly George rose to his full height and looked his father straight in the eye.

"You might have asked me," George remonstrated, "for I happen not to wish to marry Veta."

"You do not?" Dimitru asked furiously. "But I do want you to marry her, and marry her you will. I shall not live to see the stones of my mill idle when they should be milling — live to see how the corn is rowed across the

river to be milled in the other mill, led by ungodly German wheels turning of themselves. For it is a steam mill he is putting up."

"This is certain," George answered, "you can not make me marry her."

Then he left his father and went to his room. He was furious. Because his father had spoken so compellingly, Veta, of whom he had thought rather agreeably, had lost her favor in his eyes. He was going to marry whom he pleased, and not because of fifty pair of dead stones that lay around there, requesting him to do otherwise.

The following day, Sunday, he went to the inn on his side of the river, in his best clothes, looking around for any likely girl whom he had not previously remarked, so that he could make love to her, knowing full well that his father was watching his every movement. In the midst of the dance Veta arrived. She was fairer than most of them, and she had put on her best garb. Upon her bare, full neck she wore her gold necklace, her white silk shawl hung down from the comb in her hair, and her high, well-modeled boots, that reached to her knees, were decorated with veins of red and green leather.

The old man smiled to himself when he saw her, sure that George could not resist her; she was so beautiful. He was also certain that she had come to dance with his son, sent probably by Dan, her father, who already regretted what he had done. Ah! He was not going to let Dan off so easily if he saw Veta loving his son.

But the girl seemed to pay no attention to George after a perfunctory greeting. At the dance she locked her arm into the arm of the son of the blacksmith and danced with him in the second, and third, and fourth dances, avoiding dancing with George. It enraged the old man. Seating himself near his son, who was resting between dances, he said,

"That shrew is trying to play with you."

"Nobody can play with me," George answered.

"She thinks that if she can make you love her, her father will get off with less dowry than he should pay."

"Who says I want her?" George answered.

At the end of the fourth dance Veta beckoned to George to come outside; she wanted to talk to him. He followed her out quietly.

Once outside, the girl told him rapidly: "My father wants to compel me to marry you. I don't want to."

"And mine wants to compel me to marry you, and I don't want to," George answered.

"Then it is understood," Veta replied, after looking the boy straight in the face. "Are we cattle to be married against our will? We do not want it. I always knew you to be a man, George."

"No, we do not want it." And they shook hands on that.

They reëntered the inn as unobtrusively as they had gone out. George watched her walk ahead of him and thought:

"What a spirited girl! And that fool of a father thinks he can compel her to marry anybody she does not want to!"

Veta and George danced together the last dance before parting. But it was the blacksmith's son who rowed her back across the river. George returned to his mill, whistling loudly, happy with a happiness he did not understand.

The following day the miller received a visit from Dan. The bricklayers had meanwhile been stopped on the work. The two men sat down in a corner of the mill and began talking together in a roundabout way. The question was, however, soon driven to the point. Dan was already regretting that he had involved himself so deeply. Now he had to buy the machinery. The price was enormous. He was already losing confidence in the quality of the mill. He had also begun to doubt whether the people on this side of the shore would be willing to bring him their wheat and corn to be milled, and thus forsake the old mill of which

they were so proud. He even doubted now whether the people on his side of the shore would all give him their trade!

"I let things stand just as they are. That is loss enough. That is Veta's dowry."

"Should I pay for your folly?" Dimitru demanded.

"Not at all," Dan answered. "The dowry is the existence of your mill."

"That is no dowry," Dimitru answered, reassured now because the man had come to him.

"Maybe it is a larger one than you think," Dan replied hotly. "I have spent a fortune already, but if you want, I shall see the thing to the end."

"Do what you please," Dimitru answered.

Dan rowed himself home, where he called his bricklayers and started immediately building the mill.

The old miller watched his son out of the corner of his eye. Then he approached and told him.

"He says he would stop work on the mill and that would be your dowry."

"As far as I am concerned, he may complete six mills," George answered.

"Do you mean to tell me that you would live to see with your own eyes the ruin of this one?" his father asked, and clenched his fists.

"Am I to be the father of children by a mother I have not loved?" George answered.

"It is saving the mill!" the father yelled at the top of his voice. "My mill! The mill of my fathers! The mill of my grandfathers! The mill of my forefathers! It is the mill on the Bistritza! Do you understand?"

"It is nothing but bricks and stones," George answered quietly, "and I am of flesh and blood."

There was no further talk between the two men. They walked about their work mutely the whole week.

On Saturday the old miller rowed across to talk matters over with Dan. He was certain that he could overcome

his son's objections if he but drove a favorable bargain with the father of the girl. Of course, it would have been such a tremendous help if George had exerted himself and made the girl love him. Still, he had no doubt he would succeed. Dan was happy to see the miller's boat. The mill was costing a good deal more to complete than he had at first planned. It had swallowed up a good deal more than he had intended to give as Veta's dowry. Yet he maintained a defiant attitude and was urging the men to work faster and faster, raising his voice, knowing well that the other man would hear every word.

"Move faster! Move faster! This mill is going to turn when the summer is over! Move faster! Move faster!" he urged the gypsy bricklayers working under him.

Conversation started again between the two men, and this time, Dan, who felt that he was in the stronger position, waited until the other made an offer.

Finally Dimitru said: "You stop working on this mill. You give George the four stones you have here, which we can use in our mill, and you give my son four pair of oxen and five thousand leis as dowry."

"This mill is going to be completed," Dan answered, turning his back to talk to the bricklayers.

"Put on some speed, men! Move! Move!"

After a while he turned about and said: "Five thousand leis! I have spent five thousand leis this last week building here!"

"Do you think that I will accept four pair of oxen for my son, for that is all that it will be, four pair of oxen? Must I pay for your folly?"

"The mill will be completed."

There was a long discussion between the two men. Ultimately the five thousand leis were halved, on condition that nobody should know anything about it, while the four pair of oxen were admitted.

Dimitru had no sooner taken his departure than Dan dismissed the workingmen again. He went into the house

to talk to his daughter. He first told the news to his wife, who had been set against the building of the mill from the very first. For wholly apart from the fact that it was risking quite a deal of money, she was loath to see a quarrel spring up between her family and that of the miller across the river.

But she received the news without great enthusiasm. Veta had been crying the whole day in her room. She refused to be treated as if she were cattle. Why should her father barter her away against her will? Because he had entangled himself in the building of a mill of which he had no use, and which he did not want to complete?

Dan received no answer when he called for her at the door of her room. But he heard a splash in the river near by and saw her rowing across furiously to the other side of the Bistritza. She came to the door of Dimitru's mill. Her father watched her from his door. She remained outside for a few minutes, until George came out. Then she took hold of his hand and dragged him away somewhere behind the mill, to talk to him.

"They can not sell us as if we were cattle," Veta began spiritedly.

"No, they can not," George answered. "Those two old people have no consideration for our feelings. I may be loving elsewhere, so may you."

"I? I?" Veta interrupted. "Well, maybe."

"The old man was just telling me," George informed her, "that he had settled everything. He has agreed upon the dowry with your father. I have to do as he says, or he will take me off his will and throw me out of the house."

"And what will you do?" Veta asked compassionately.

"He may cut me out of a hundred wills and a thousand mills," George cried out passionately.

She gripped both his hands in hers, and they looked into one another's eyes admiringly. They admired each other's pluck and willingness to suffer for a principle.

When Veta returned to her home she found her father indifferent. It enraged her. He did not care what she thought. He should see.

He did not tell her anything, sure as he was that the bargain was as good as closed. But when Dimitru did not show up that night, bringing his son to celebrate, as they had agreed, Dan was furious. The table was set. The nearest of the family had been called. They were shamed.

"Those two millers on the other side think they have me by the throat," he railed, "because that fool girl rowed across! It is because of you, Veta. They think because you have gone to talk to him that he can obtain any dowry he wants from me. Not a penny more will he have! Not a penny!" he thundered. "And Monday we start building on the mill again!"

They had been shamed. Even Veta felt the insult.... She did not know how it could have been otherwise. Late that night she heard loud voices coming across the waters from the old mill. Father and son were quarreling.

Early Monday morning the gypsies were called together again, and the bricks were laid furiously and in haste, one on top of the other. It hurt George to think that the girl was suffering so. He was thinking of the bitter words her father was telling her. He should not! That fool of a Dan might even beat her! If he, George, ever found that out...

But she was not to be bartered away. And how proud she was that George was willing to be stricken from his father's will, perhaps driven from his home, because of a principle!

Watched closely, the following Sunday she could not row across to the other inn. She would have liked so much to talk to him! She went to dance at her own inn, and as the youngsters danced with her, she looked at them closely and measured every one. Would Stephan, the wheelwright's son, who danced with her now, have shown as much spirit as George did? She was certain he would

not. And would Jorga have refused what his father bade him do? She doubted it. And even the son of the priest, of the *popa*, who was the school-teacher of the village, would not have dared to do otherwise than his father commanded. She wished George was there, so that she could tell him how much she admired him.

At the inn on the other side of the river George waited impatiently. The girls about him did not measure up to Veta. All their fathers would have had to do was to come together, agree on the dowry, and the girls would have nothing to say, like cattle; even if their hearts were already pledged elsewhere. Not so, Veta. He waited for her to come. When she did not appear, he began to think she was being mistreated by her father. Dan was an excitable, red-haired man. Undoubtedly she was being persecuted, perhaps punished by her parents. She would be present otherwise.

The first floor of the other mill was almost ready. It was nothing but bricks and stones, like his mill, bricks and stones for which the older people were willing to barter away the happiness of the younger ones.

When the inn was closed and Veta had not appeared, he rowed across the Bistritza and stole up stealthily beneath her window. The house was in darkness. Only from one little window, below, shimmered the flat light of the little oil candle under the ikon in Dan's room.

George called softly under Veta's room and waited. A light showed a second afterward behind the window. Then a head stuck out. He greeted her without saying a word. She answered, and he beckoned her out. He waited a long time, for she had to take many precautions not to awaken anybody in the house, before she came down in her bare feet and with only a rug thrown about her shoulders.

They went hurriedly behind a clump of trees. George looked into her eyes and found them red.

"You have been crying, Veta," he told her.

She did not answer.

"Have you been at the dance?" he asked her.

"I went," she answered, "but there was not much joy in dancing. Have you been at the dance?"

"I was in the inn, but hardly danced at all — hardly danced, thinking of what you might be doing."

"Oh, I could not come across, George," she said. "You understand, I could not."

"I understand. That savage father of yours! If he dared lay his hands on you . . ."

"That he won't do. But that they should want to trade us like cattle," Veta began again, trembling with fury.

"They have found their match," George answered.

Suddenly several torches were lit in Veta's room. Scared, the girl pointed them out to the young man.

"God! They will find out I am not in my room! If he finds me here, he will kill you."

Then the voice of Dan was heard as he called at the top of his voice, "Veta! Veta! Veta!"

She flattened herself against the young man, who encircled her with his arms.

"Do not fear. He shall not touch you."

Dan and his wife were now looking everywhere, calling "Veta! Veta! Veta! Veta!"

The old man had his gun in his hands. He was cursing and swearing as he searched.

"He will kill you if he sees you," Veta said to George.

"It is of you I am thinking," he whispered softly in her ears.

The boat in which he had come was hidden in a cove only a few hundred feet away from them. The other people of the house were by now up and making a considerable noise. People from near-by houses came out to see what it was about. At a sign from George, Veta began to crawl after him, under the bushes, holding on to one of his hands, until they reached the boat. With one powerful stroke George

shoved the little craft to the middle of the river where it was taken and carried down-stream toward his own mill.

The next moment a loud report from Dan's gun echoed through the hills. People were yelling. Women were crying. The dogs howled. But in a few more strokes the boat reached the other shore and George, protecting Veta by remaining behind her, jumped over the wall. He almost carried her to the door of the mill.

The mill was closed. He beat upon the door with his fists.

After what seemed an age his father's head stuck out of an upper window and asked, "Who is there?"

"It is I, George," the son answered. "Open."

"You are no son of mine," the old man answered. He had evidently been drinking heavily. "You are no son of mine, and this door is closed to you!"

People gathered about them. The noise was terrific.

"Open the door!" George yelled at the top of his voice. "Open the door, for I have brought a bride with me!"

And he turned Veta so that she should be seen by his father.

"Bride indeed! And is that the way your bride is attired when you bring her home? And what is the meaning of the hurrying lights, and the gunshots across the river, and all the people?"

"Open the door! Her father is seeking Veta to kill her!"

"He will never pay a dowry now," moaned the old miller as he opened the door.

They had hardly gone in when Dan, too, entered the door that had been left open. He was still holding his gun by the barrel, and put out his hand toward his daughter. The villagers burst in in their night-clothes.

"Call the priest!" George yelled as he held the old man away at arm's length. "This is my wedding night!"

There still stands an unfinished mill on the other side of the Bistritza. The four millstones have long since been thrown into the discard, worn too light to mill the heavy,

hard grain of the district. The unfinished mill is known throughout the whole neighborhood as "The Miller's Dowry."

KONRAD BERCOVICI

As this story has doubtless convinced the reader, Konrad Bercovici knows Rumania intimately and writes of it with a native understanding. He was born in Dobrudja, Rumania, June 23, 1882, and his first story was printed in a Rumanian magazine when he was twelve years old. He has lived in Paris and other European cities and now makes New York his home. His best stories have as their background the life of the peasants in Rumania, their feast days and daily work, the traditions of their tribes, the simple, elemental emotions which motivate their lives. One may know Mr. Bercovici from his stories as a man who hates all shams, loves the mysteries and beauties of nature, and has a feeling for music whether in word or instrument.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What is the theme of this story? What characteristic in George and Veta is emphasized? Is this a characteristic of all young people or of these only? How do circumstances contrive to emphasize this trait in George and Veta?
2. Find references in the story which show that the mill was "the pride of generations" in the family of Dimitru. What figure of speech is contained in Dimitru's words: "Dan will put up a mill on the other side and starve our stones?" How does this figure express the feeling of Dimitru for his mill? How does George show the same feeling? Describe his methods of helping the poor who brought corn to the mill.
3. This story makes the Rumanian country and its people very real to us. Describe Dimitru and his position among the peasants. In the description of Veta at the dance, one may get a good picture of the Rumanian peasant costume. Some student with artistic ability may draw or paint such a picture. Others may bring to class

pictures of Rumanian peasants from the *National Geographic Magazine.* Read other Rumanian stories by Bercovici and report on these in class, reading aloud selected portions which give good pictures of the country or the people.

4. Note Dimitru's pride in his fifty worn millstones. Write *The Story the Millstone Told,* imagining that one worn old stone comes to life and tells how once it stopped suddenly upon hearing a voice cry, "Mill not this corn." Several pupils might take this subject, each writing a different tale. Another good theme subject might be "*Dimitru Tells of His Son's Wedding.*" Dimitru at the inn telling the story in his own way suggests an interesting picture.

Other Short Stories by Bercovici:

The Beggar of Alcazar
Seed
Ghitza
Flood
Millstones
Steel against Steel
The Law of the River

Stories with a foreign background:

The Rose of the Ghetto — Israel Zangwill
Natalka's Portion — Rose Cohen
Our Lady's Juggler — Anatole France
The Last Class — Alphonse Daudet
A Lear of the Steppes — Ivan Turgenev
The Thief — Feodor Dostoyevski
The Shot — Alexander Pushkin

THE MAN WHO CURSED THE LILIES

By CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

Tedge looked from the pilot-house at the sweating deckhand who stood on the stubby bow of the Marie Louise heaving vainly on the pole thrust into the barrier of crushed water hyacinths across the channel.

Crump, the engineer, shot a sullen look at the master ere he turned back to the crude oil motor whose mad pounding rattled the old bayou stern-wheeler from keel to hogchains.

"She's full ahead now!" grunted Crump. And then, with a covert glance at the single passenger sitting on the fore-deck cattle pens, the engineman repeated his warning, "Yeh'll lose the cows, Tedge, if you keep on fightin' the flowers. They're bad f'r feed and water — they can't stand another day o' sun!"

Tedge knew it. But he continued to shake his hairy fist at the deckhand and roar his anathemas upon the flower-choked bayou. He knew his crew was grinning evilly, for they remembered Bill Tedge's year-long feud with the lilies. Crump had bluntly told the skipper he was a fool for trying to push up this little-frequented bayou from Cote Blanche Bay to the higher land of the west Louisiana coast, where he had planned to unload his cattle.

Tedge had bought the cargo himself near Beaumont from a beggared ranchman whose stock had to go on the market because, for seven months, there had been no rain in eastern Texas, and the short-grass range was gone.

Tedge knew where there was feed for the starving animals, and the Marie Louise was coming back light. By the Intercoastal Canal and the shallow string of bays along the Texas-Louisiana line, the bayou boat could crawl safely back to the grassy swamp lands that fringe the sugar plantations of Bayou Teche. Tedge had bought his

living cargo so ridiculously cheap that if half of them stood the journey he would profit. And they would cost him nothing for winter ranging up in the swamp lands. In the spring he would round up what steers had lived and sell them, grass-fat, in New Orleans. He'd land them there with his flap-paddle bayou boat, too, for the Marie Louise ranged up and down the Inter-coastal Canal and the uncharted swamp lakes and bays adjoining, trading and thieving and serving the skipper's obscure ends.

Only now, when he turned up Cote Blanche Bay, some hundred miles west of the Mississippi passes, to make the last twenty miles of swamp channel to his landing, he faced his old problem. Summer long the water hyacinths were a pest to navigation on the coastal bayous, but this June they were worse than Tedge had ever seen. He knew the reason: the mighty Mississippi was at high flood, and as always then, a third of its yellow waters were sweeping down the Atchafalaya River on a "short cut" to the Mexican Gulf. And somewhere above, on its west bank, the Atchafalaya levees had broken and the flood waters were all through the coastal swamp channels.

Tedge grimly knew what it meant. He'd have to go farther inland to find his free range, but now, worst of all, the floating gardens of the coast swamps were coming out of the numberless channels on the *crevasse* water.

He expected to fight them as he had done for twenty years with his dirty bayou boat. He'd fight and curse and struggle through the *îles flotantes*, and denounce the Federal Government, because it did not destroy the lilies in the obscure bayous where he traded, as it did on Bayou Teche and Terrebonne, with its pump-boats which sprayed the hyacinths with a mixture of oil and soda until the tops shrivelled and the trailing roots then dragged the flowers to the bottom.

"Yeh'll not see open water till the river cleans the swamps of lilies," growled Crump. "I never seen the beat of 'em! The high water's liftin' 'em from ponds where

they never been touched by a boat's wheel and they're out in the channels now. If yeh make the plantations yeh'll have to keep east'ard and then up the Atchafalaya and buck the main flood water, Tedge!"

Tedge knew that, too. But he suddenly broke into curses upon his engineer, his boat, the sea and sky and man. But mostly the lilies. He could see a mile up the bayou between cypress-grown banks, and not a foot of water showed. A solid field of green, waxy leaves and upright purple spikes, jammed tight and moving. That was what made the master rage. They were moving — a flower glacier slipping imperceptibly to the gulf bays. They were moving slowly but inexorably, and his dirty cattle boat, frantically driving into the blockade, was moving backward — stern first!

He hated them with the implacable fury of a man whose fists had lorded his world. A water hyacinth — what was it? He could stamp one to a smear on his deck, but a river of them no man could fight. He swore the lilies had ruined his whisky-running years ago to the Atchafalaya lumber camps; they blocked Grand River when he went to log-towing; they had cost him thousands of dollars for repairs and lost time in his swamp ventures.

Bareheaded under the semi-tropic sun, he glowered at the lily-drift. Then he snarled at Crump to reverse the motor. Tedge would retreat again!

"I'll drive the boat clean around Southwest Pass to get shut of 'em! No feed, huh, for these cows! They'll feed sharks, they will! Huh, Mr. Cowman, the blisterin' lilies cost me five hundred dollars already!"

The lone passenger smoked idly and watched the gaunt cattle staggering, penned in the flat, dead heat of the fore-deck. Tedge cursed him, too, under his breath. Milt Rogers had asked to make the coast run from Beaumont on Tedge's boat. Tedge remembered what Rogers said — he was going to see a girl who lived up Bayou Bœuf above Tedge's destination. Tedge remembered that girl — a

Cajan girl whom he once heard singing in the floating gardens while Tedge was battling and cursing to pass the blockade.

He hated her for loving the lilies, and the man for loving her. He burst out again with his volcanic fury at the green-and-purple horde.

"They're a fine sight to see," mused the other, "after a man's eyes been burned out ridin' the dry range; no rain in nine months up there — nothin' green or pretty in ——"

"Pretty!" Tedge seemed to menace with his little shifty eyes. "I wish all them lilies had one neck and I could twist it! Jest one head, and me stompin' it! Yeh! — and all the damned flowers in the world with it! Yeh! And me watchin' 'em die!"

The man from the dry lands smoked idly under the awning. His serenity evoked all the savagery of Tedge's feud with the lilies. Pretty! A man who dealt with cows seeing beauty in anything! Well, the girl did it — that swamp angel this Rogers was going to visit. That Aurelie Frenet who sang in the flower-starred river — that was it! Tedge glowered on the Texan — he hated him, too, because this loveliness gave him peace, while the master of the Marie Louise must fume about his wheelhouse, a perspiring madman.

It took an hour for the Marie even to retreat and find steerage-way easterly off across a shallow lake, mirroring the marsh shores in the sunset. Across it the bayou boat wheezed and thumped drearily, drowning the bellowing of the dying steers. Once the deckhand stirred and pointed.

"Lilies, Cap'n — pourin' from all the swamps, and dead ahead there now!"

Scowling, Tedge held to the starboard. Yes, there they were — a phalanx of flowers in the dusk. He broke into wild curses at them, his boat, the staggering cattle.

"I'll drive to the open gulf to get rid of 'em! Outside, to sea! Yeh! Stranger, yeh'll see salt water, and lilies drownin' in it! I'll show yeh 'em dead and dried on the

sands like dead men's dried bones! Yeh'll see yer pretty flowers a-dyin'!"

The lone cowman ignored the sneer. "You better get the animals to feed and water. Another mornin' of heat and crowdin' ——"

"Let 'em rot! Yer pretty flowers done it — pretty flowers — spit o' hell! I knowed 'em — I fought 'em — I'll fight 'em to the death of 'em!"

His little red-rimmed eyed hardly veiled his contempt for Milt Rogers. A cowman, sailing this dusky purple bay to see a girl! A girl who sang in the lily drift — a-sailing on this dirty, reeking bumboat, with cattle dying jammed in the pens! Suddenly Tedge realized a vast malevolent pleasure — he couldn't hope to gain from his perishing cargo; and he began to gloat at the agony spread below his wheelhouse window and the cattleman's futile pity for them.

"They'll rot on Point Au Fer! We'll heave the stink of them, dead and alive, to the sharks of Au Fer Pass! Drownin' cows in dyin' lilies ——"

And the small craft of his brain suddenly awakened coolly above his heat. Why, yes! Why hadn't he thought of it? He swung the stubby nose of the Marie more easterly in the hot, windless dusk. After a while the black deckhand looked questioningly up at the master.

"We're takin' round," Tedge grunted, "outside Au Fer!"

The black stretched on the cattle-pen frame. Tedge was a master-hand among the reefs and shoals, even if the flap-paddle Marie had no business outside. But the sea was nothing but a star-set velvet ribbon on which she crawled like a dirty insect. And no man questioned Tedge's will.

Only, an hour later, the engineman came up and forward to stare into the faster-flowing water. Even now he pointed to a hyacinth clump.

"Yeh!" the master growled. "I'll show yeh, Rogers!

Worlds o' flowers! Out o' the swamps and the tide'll send 'em back again on the reefs. I'll show yeh 'em — dead, dried white like men's bones." Then he began to whisper huskily to his engineer: "It's time fer it. Five hundred fer yeh, Crump — a hundred fer the nigger, or I knock his head in. She brushes the bar, and yer oil tank goes — yeh understand?" He watched a red star in the south.

Crump looked about. No sail or light or coast guard about Au Fer — at low tide not even a skiff could find the passages. He nodded cunningly:

"She's old and fire-fitten. Tedge, I knowed yer mind — I was always waitin' fer the word. It's a place fer it — and yeh say yeh carry seven hundred on them cows? Boat an' cargo — three thousand seven hundred ——"

"They'll be that singed and washed in the sands off Au Fer that nobody'll know what they died of!" retorted Tedge thickly. "Yeh, go down, Crump, and lay yer waste and oil right. I trust yeh, Crump — the nigger'll get his, too. She'll ride high and burn flat, hoggin' in the sand ——"

"She's soaked with oil plumb for'ard to the pens now," grunted Crump. "She's fitten to go like a match all along when she bumps ——"

He vanished, and the master cunningly watched the ember star southeasterly.

He was holding above it now, to port and landward. The white, hard sands must be shoaling fast under the cattle-freighted Marie. It little mattered about the course now; she would grind her nose in the quiet reef shortly.

Tedge merely stared, expectantly awaiting the blow. And when it came he was malevolently disappointed. A mere slithering along over the sand, a creak, a slight jar, and she lay dead in the flat, calm sea — it was ridiculous that that smooth beaching would break an oil tank, that the engine spark would flare the machine waste, leap to the greasy beams and floors.

The wheezy exhaust coughed on; the belt flapped as the

paddle wheel kept on its dead shove of the Marie's keel into the sand. Hogjaw had shouted and run forward. He was staring into the phosphorescent water circling about the bow when Crump raised his cry:

"Fire — amidships!"

Tedge ran down the after-stairs. Sulphurously he began cursing at the trickle of smoke under the motor frame. It was nothing — a child could have put it out with a bucket of sand. But upon it fell Tedge and the engineer, stamping, shouting, shoving oil-soaked waste upon it, and covertly blocking off the astounded black deckman when he rushed to aid.

"Water, Hogjaw!" roared the master. "She's gainin' on us — she's under the bilge floor now!" He hurled a bucket viciously at his helper. And as they pretended to fight the fire, Crump suddenly began laughing and stood up. The deckman was grinning also. The master watched him narrowly.

"Kick the stuff into the waste under the stairs," he grunted. "Hogjaw, this here boat's goin' — yeh understand? We take the skiff and pull to the shrimp camps, and she hogs down and burns ——"

The black man was laughing. Then he stopped curiously. "The cows ——"

"Damn the cows! I'll git my money back on 'em! Yeh go lower away on the skiff davits. Yeh don't ask me nothin' — yeh don't know nothin'!"

"Sho', boss! I don't know nothin', or see nothin'!"

He swung out of the smoke already drifting greasily up from the foul waist of the Marie Louise. A little glare of red was beginning to reflect from the mirrored sea. The ripples of the beaching had vanished; obscurely, undramatically as she had lived, the Marie Louise sat on the bar to choke in her own fetid fumes.

Tedge clambered to the upper deck and hurried to his bunk in the wheelhouse. There were papers there he must save — the master's license, the insurance policy,

and a few other things. The smell of burning wood and grease was thickening, and suddenly now, through it, he saw the quiet, questioning face of the stranger.

He had forgotten him completely. Tedge's small brain had room but for one idea at a time: first his rage at the lilies, and then the wrecking of the Marie. And this man knew. He had been staring down the after-companion-way. He had seen and heard. He had seen the master and crew laughing while the fire mounted.

Tedge came to him. "We're quittin' ship," he growled.

"Yes, but the cattle ——" The other looked stupefiedly at him.

"We got to pull inside afore the sea comes up ——"

"Well, break the pens, can't you? Give 'em a chance to swim for a bar. I'm a cowman myself — I cain't let dumb brutes burn and not lift a hand ——"

The fire in the waist was beginning to roar. A plume of smoke streamed straight up in the starlight. The glare showed the younger man's startled eyes. He shifted them to look over the foredeck rail down to the cattle. Sparks were falling among them, the fire veered slightly forward, and the survivors were crowding uneasily over the fallen ones, catching that curious sense of danger which forewarns creatures of the wild before the Northers, a burning forest, or creeping flood, to move on.

"You cain't leave 'em so," muttered the stranger. "No; I seen you ——"

He did not finish. Tedge had been setting himself for what he knew he should do. The smaller man had his jaw turned as he stared at the suffering brutes. And Tedge's mighty fist struck him full on the temple. The master leaned over the low rail to watch quietly.

The man who wished to save the cattle was there among them. A little flurry of sparks drove over the spot he fell upon, and then a maddened surge of gaunt steers. Tedge wondered if he should go finish the job. No, there was little use. He had crashed his fist into the face of a shrimp-

seine hauler once, and the fellow's neck had shifted on his spine — and once he had maced a woman up-river in a shantyboat drinking bout — Tedge had got away both times. Now and then, boasting about the shrimp camps, he hinted mysteriously at his two killings, and showed his freckled, hairy right hand.

"If they find anything of him — he got hurt in the wreck," the master grinned. He couldn't see the body, for a black longhorn had fallen upon his victim, it appeared. Anyhow, the cattle were milling desperately around in the pen, the stranger who said his name was Milt Rogers would be a lacerated lump of flesh in that mad stampede long ere the fire reached him. Tedge got his tin document box and went aft.

Crump and Hogjaw were already in the flat-bottomed bayou skiff, holding it off the Marie Louise's port runway, and the master stepped into it. The heat was singeing their faces by now.

"Pull off," grunted the skipper, "around east'ard. This bar sticks clean out o' water off there, and you lay around it, Hogjaw. They won't be no sea 'til the breeze lifts at sunup."

The big black heaved on the short oars. The skiff was a hundred yards out on the glassy sea when Crump spoke cunningly, "I knowed something ——"

"Yeh?" Tedge turned from his bow seat to look past the oarsman's head at the engineman. "Yeh knowed ——"

"This Rogers, he was tryin' to get off the burnin' wreck and he fell, somehow or ——"

"The oil tank blew, and a piece o' pipe took him," grunted Tedge. "I tried to drag him out o' the fire — Gawd knows I did, didn't I, Crump?"

Crump nodded scaredly. The black oarsman's eyes narrowed and he crouched dumbly as he rowed. Tedge was behind him — Tedge of the Marie Louise who could kill with his fists. No, Hogjaw knew nothing — he never would know anything.

"I jest took him on out o' kindness," mumbled Tedge. "I got no license fer passenger business. Jest a bum I took on to go and see his swamp girl up Des Amoureaux. Well, it ain't no use sayin' anything, is it now?"

A mile away the wreck of the Marie Louise appeared as a yellow-red rent in the curtain of night. Red, too, was the flat, calm sea, save northerly where a sand ridge gleamed. Tedge turned to search for its outlying point. There was a pass here beyond which the reefs began once more and stretched on, a barrier to the shoal inside waters. When the skiff had drawn about the sand spit, the reflecting waters around the Marie had vanished, and the fire appeared as a fallen meteor burning on the flat, black belt of encircling reef.

Tedge's murderous little eyes watched easterly. They must find the other side of the tidal pass and go up it to strike off for the distant shrimp camps with their story of the end of the Marie Louise — boat and cargo a total loss on Au Fer sands.

Upon the utter sea silence there came a sound — a faint bawling of dying cattle, of trampled, choked cattle in the fume and flames. It was very far off now, and to-morrow's tide and wind would find nothing but a blackened timber, a swollen, floating carcass or two — nothing more.

But the black man could see the funeral pyre, the distant glare of it was showing the whites of his eyes faintly to the master, when suddenly he stopped rowing. A drag, the soft sibilance of a moving thing, was on his oar blade. He jerked it free, staring.

"Lilies, boss — makin' out dis pass, too, lilies ——"

"I see 'em — drop below 'em!" Tedge felt the glow of an unappeasable anger mount to his temples. "Damn 'em — I see 'em!"

There they were, upright, tranquil, immense hyacinths — their spear-points three feet above the water, their feathery streamers drifting six feet below; the broad, waxy leaves floating above their bulbous surface mats — they came on

silently under the stars; they vanished under the stars seaward to their death.

"Yeh!" roared Tedge. "Sun and sea to-morry — they'll be back on Au Fer like dried bones o' dead men in the sand! Bear east'ard off of 'em!"

The oarsman struggled in the deeper pass water. The skiff bow suddenly plunged into a wall of green-and-purple bloom. The points brushed Tedge's cheek. He cursed and smote them, tore them from the low bow and flung them. But the engineman stood up and peered into the starlight.

"Yeh'll not make it. Better keep up the port shore. I cain't see nothin' but lilies east'ard — worlds o' flowers comin' with the *crevasse* water behind 'em." He dipped a finger to the water, tasted of it, and grumbled on: "It ain't hardly salt, the big rivers are pourin' such a flood out o' the swamps. Worlds o' flowers comin' out the passes ——"

"Damn the flowers!" Tedge arose, shaking his fist at them. "Back out o' 'em! Pull up the Au Fer side, and we'll break through 'em in the bay!"

Against the ebb tide close along Au Fer reef, the oarsman toiled until Crump, the lookout, grumbled again.

"The shoal's blocked wi' 'em! They're stranded on the ebb. Tedge, yeh'll have to wait for more water to pass this bar inside 'em. Yeh try to cross the pass, and the lilies'll have us all to sea in this crazy skiff when the wind lifts wi' the sun."

"I'm clean wore out," the black man muttered. "Yeh can wait fer day and tide on the sand, boss."

"Well, drive her in, then!" raged the skipper. "The in-tide'll set before daylight. We'll take it up the bay."

He rolled over the bow, knee-deep in the warm inlet water, and dragged the skiff through the shoals. Crump jammed an oar in the sand; and warping the headline to this, the three trudged on to the white dry ridge. Tedge flung himself by the first stubby grass clump.

"Clean beat," he muttered. "By day we'll pass 'em. Damn 'em — and I'll see 'em dyin' in the sun — lilies like dried, dead weeds on the sand — that's what they'll be in a couple o' days — he said they were pretty, that fello' back there ——" Lying with his head on his arm, he lifted a thumb to point over his shoulder. He couldn't see the distant blotch of fire against the low stars — he didn't want to. He couldn't mark the silent drift of the sea gardens in the pass, but he gloated in the thought that they were riding to their death. The pitiless sun, the salt tides drunk up to their spongy bulbs, and their glory passed — they would be matted refuse on the shores and a man could trample them. Yes, the sea was with Tedge, and the rivers, too; the flood waters were lifting the lilies from their immemorable strongholds and forcing them out to their last pageant of death.

The three castaways slept in the warm sand. It was an hour later that some other living thing stirred at the far end of Au Fer reef. A scorched and weakened steer came on through salt pools to stagger and fall. Presently another, and then a slow line of them. They crossed the higher ridge to huddle about a sink that might have made them remember the dry drinking holes of their arid home plains. Tired, gaunt cattle mooing lonesomely, when the man came about them to dig with his bloody fingers in the sand.

He tried another place, and another — he didn't know — he was a man of the short-grass country, not a coaster; perhaps a sandy sink might mean fresh water. But after each effort the damp feeling on his hands was from his gashed and battered head and not life-giving water. He wiped the blood from his eyes and stood up in the starlight.

"Twenty-one of 'em — alive — and me," he muttered. "I got 'em off — they trampled me and beat me down, but I got their pens open. Twenty-one livin' — and me on the sands!"

He wondered stupidly how he had done it. The stern

of the Marie Louise had burned off and sogged down in deep water, but her bow hung to the reef, and in smoke and flame he had fought the cattle over it. They clustered now in the false water-hole, silent, listless, as if they knew the uselessness of the urge of life on Au Fer reef.

And after a while the man went on eastward. Where and how far the sand ridge stretched he did not know. Vaguely he knew of the tides and sun to-morrow. From the highest point he looked back. The wreck was a dull red glow, the stars above it cleared now of smoke. The sea, too, seemed to have gone back to its infinite peace, as if it had washed itself daintily after this greasy morsel it must hide in its depths.

A half hour the man walked wearily, and then before him stretched water again. He turned up past the tide flowing down the pass — perhaps that was all of Au Fer. A narrow spit of white sand at high tide, and even over that, the sea breeze freshening, the surf would curl?

"Ships never come in close, they said," he mused tiredly, "and miles o' shoals to the land — and then just swamp for miles. Dumb brutes o' cows, and me on this — and no water nor feed, nor shade from the sun."

He stumbled on through the shallows, noticing apathetically that the water was running here. Nearly to his waist he waded, peering into the starlight. He was a cowman and he couldn't swim; he had never seen anything but the dry ranges until he said he would go find the girl he had met once on the upper Brazos — a girl who told him of sea and sunken forests, of islands of flowers drifting in lonely swamp lakes — he had wanted to see that land, but mostly the Cajan girl of Bayou Des Amoureaux.

He wouldn't see her now; he would die among dying cattle, but maybe it was fit for a cattleman to go that way — a Texas man and Texas cows.

Then he saw a moving thing. It rode out of the dark and brushed him. It touched him with soft fingers and he drew them to him. A water hyacinth, and its purple

spike topped his head as he stood waist-deep. So cool its leaves, and the dripping bulbs that he pressed them to his bloody cheek. He sank his teeth into them for that coolness on his parched tongue. The spongy bulb was sweet; it exhaled odorous moisture. He seized it ravenously. It carried sweet water, redolent of green forest swamps!

He dragged at another floating lily, sought under the leaves for the buoyant bulb. A drop or two of the fresh water a man could press from each!

Like a starving animal he moved in the shoals, seeing more drifting garden clumps. And then a dark object that did not drift. He felt for it slowly, and then straightened up, staring about.

A flat-bottomed bayou skiff, and in it the oars, a riverman's blanket-roll of greasy clothes, and a tin box! He knew the box. On one end, in faded gilt, was the name "B. Tedge." Rogers had seen it on the grimy shelf in the pilot house on the Marie Louise. He felt for the rope; the skiff was barely scraping bottom. Yes, they had moored it here — they must be camped on the sands of Au Fer, awaiting the dawn.

A boat? He didn't know what a Texas cowman could do with a boat on an alien and unknown shore, but he slipped into it, raised an oar, and shoved back from the sandy spit. At least he could drift off Au Fer's waterless desolation. Tedge would kill him to-morrow when he found him there; because he knew Tedge had fired the Marie for the insurance.

So he poled slowly off. The skiff drifted now. Rogers tried to turn to the oar athwart, and awkwardly he stumbled. The oar seemed like a roll of thunder when it struck the gunwale.

And instantly a hoarse shout arose behind him. Tedge's voice — Tedge had not slept well. The gaunt cattle burning or choking in the salt tide, or perhaps the lilies of Bayou Bœuf — anyhow, he was up with a cry and dashing for the skiff. In a moment Rogers saw him.

The Texas man began driving desperately on the oars. He heard the heavy rush of the skipper's feet in the deepening water. Tedge's voice became a bull-like roar as the depth began to check him. To his waist, and the slow skiff was but ten yards away; to his great shoulders, and the clumsy oarsman was but five.

And with a yell of triumph Tedge lunged out swimming. Whoever the fugitive, he was hopeless with the oars. The skiff swung this way and that, and a strong man at its stern could hurl it and its occupant bottom-side up in Au Fer Pass. Tedge, swimming in Au Fer Pass, his fingers to the throat of this unknown marauder! There'd be another one go — and nothing but his hands — Bill Tedge's hands that the shrimp camps feared.

Just hold him under — that was all. Tread water, and hold the throat beneath until its throbbing ceased. Tedge could; he feared no man. Another overhand stroke, and he just missed the wobbling stern of the light skiff.

He saw the man start up and raise an oar as if to strike. Tedge laughed triumphantly. Another plunge and his fingers touched the gunwale. And then he dived; he would bring his back up against the flat bottom and twist his enemy's footing from under him. Then in the deep water Tedge lunged up for the flat keel, and slowly across his brow an invisible hand seemed to caress him.

He opened his eyes to see a necklace of opalescent jewels gathering about his neck; he tore at it and the phosphorescent water gleamed all about him with feathery pendants. And when his head thrust above water, the moment's respite had allowed the skiff to straggle beyond his reach.

Tedge shouted savagely and lunged again — and about his legs came the soft clasp of the drifting hyacinth roots. Higher, firmer; and he turned to kick free of them. He saw the man in the boat poling uncertainly in the tide not six feet beyond him. And now, in open water, Tedge plunged on in fierce exultance. One stroke — and the stars beyond the boatman became obscured; the swimmer

struck the soft, yielding barrier of the floating islands. This time he did not lose time in drawing from them; he raised his mighty arms and strove to beat them down, flailing the broad leaves until the spiked blossoms fell about him. A circlet of them caressed his cheek. He lowered his head and swam bull-like into the drift; and when he knew the pressure ahead was tightening slowly to rubbery bands, forcing him gently from his victim, Tedge raised his voice in wild curses.

He fought and threshed the lilies, and they gave him cool, velvety kisses in return. He dived and came up through them and then, staring upward, he saw the tall, purple spikes against the stars. And they were drifting — they were sailing seaward to their death. He couldn't see the boat now for the shadowy hosts; and for the first time fear glutted his heart. It came as a paroxysm of new sensation — Tedge of the Marie Louise who had never feared.

But this was different, this soft and moving web of silence. No, not quite silence, for past his ear the splendid hyacinths drifted with a musical creaking, leaf on leaf, the buoyant bulbs brushing each other. The islets joined and parted; once he saw open water and plunged for it — and over his shoulders there surged a soft coverlet. He turned and beat it, he churned his bed into a furious welter, and the silken curtain lowered.

He shrank from it now, staring. The feathery roots matted across his chest, the mass of them felt slimy like the hide of a drowned brute.

"Drownin' cows" — he muttered thickly — "comin' on a man driftin' and drownin' — no, no! Lilies, jest lilies — damn 'em!"

The tall spiked flowers seemed nodding — yes, just lilies, drifting and singing elfin music to the sea tide. Tedge roared once again his hatred of them; he raised and battered his huge fists into their beauty, and they seemed to smile in the starlight. Then, with a howl, he dived.

He would beat them — deep water was here in the pass, and he would swim mightily far beneath the trailing roots — he would find the man with the boat yet and hurl him to die in the hyacinth bloom.

He opened his eyes in the deep, clear water and exulted. He, Tedge, had outwitted the bannered argosies. With bursting lungs he charged off across the current, thinking swiftly, coolly, now of the escape. And as he neared the surface he twisted to glance upward. It was light there — a light brighter than the stars, but softer, evanescent. Mullet and squib were darting about or clinging to a feathery forest that hung straight down upon him. Far and near there came little darts of pale fire, gleaming and expiring with each stir in the phosphorescent water.

And he had to rise; a man could not hold the torturing air in his lungs for ever. Yes, he would tear a path to the stars again and breathe. His arms flailed into the first tenuous streamers, which parted in pearly lace before his eyes. He breasted higher, and they were all about him now; his struggles evoked glowing bubble-jewels which drifted upward to expire. He grasped the soft roots and twisted and sought to raise himself. He had a hand to the surface bulbs, but a silken mesh seemed tightening about him.

And it was drifting — everything was drifting in the deep pass of Au Fer. He tried to howl in the hyacinth web, and choked — and then he merely fought in his close-pressing cocoon, thrusting one hard fist to grasp the broad leaves. He clung to them dumbly, his face so close to the surface that the tall spiked flowers smiled down — but they drifted inexorably with a faint, creaking music, leaf on leaf.

Tedge opened his eyes to a flicker of myriad lights. The sound was a roaring now — like the surf on the reefs in the hurricane month; or the thunder of maddened steers above him across this flowery sea meadow. Perhaps the man he had killed rode with this stampede? Tedge shrank

under the lilies — perhaps they could protect him now? Even the last stroke of his hands made luminous beauty of the under-running tide.

An outward-bound shrimp lugger saw the figures on Au Fer reef and came to anchor beyond the shoals. The Cajan crew rowed up to where Milt Rogers and Crump and the black deckhand were watching by a pool. The shrimpers listened to the cowman, who had tied the sleeve of his shirt about his bloody head.

"You can get a barge down from Morgan City and take the cows off before the sea comes high," said Rogers quietly. "They're eating the lilies — and they find sweet water in 'em. Worlds o' lilies driftin' to sea with sweet water in the bulbs!" And he added, watching Crump and the black man who seemed in terror of him: "I want to get off, too. I want to see the swamp country where worlds o' flowers come from!"

He said no more. He did not even look in the pool where Crump pointed. He was thinking of that girl of the swamps who had bid him come to her. But all along the white surf line he could see the green-and-purple plumes of the hyacinth warriors tossing in the breeze — legion upon legion, coming to die gloriously on Au Fer's sands.

But first they sent a herald; for in Tedge's hand, as he lay in the pool, one waxen-leafed banner with a purple spear-point glittered in the sun.

CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

Charles Tenney Jackson was born at Saint Louis in 1874. When the Spanish-American War broke out, Mr. Jackson left the University of Wisconsin, where he was a student, and entered the army. As a newspaper correspondent he gained valuable training for his later work in the field of the short story. After the war he was on the staff of the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and later of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. His present home is Asheville, North Carolina.

The following extract from a daily paper during the great flood of 1927 will be of interest to readers of this story:

FLOWERS HAMPER RELIEF

Access to the inundated section, on the southern border of the vast lake which is racing to the gulf, has been cut off by the heavy growth of water hyacinths in the Bayous.

These flowers have added to the troubles of those living along Bayou Teche and other bayous of the section. Huge masses of them, loosened by the flood waters, have floated down the bayous and lodged against bridges and piers, where they have added greatly to the strain which the bridges are under from the high waters. In some cases they have made the bridges so unsafe that they have been closed.

The water hyacinths on Louisiana bayous form a problem in normal times. After a hurricane last fall they were backed up in Bayou Teche to a depth of nine feet in some places and were so solid that men and horses could cross on them. A party of volunteers left New Iberia this morning with dynamite to open the way into the Chene country.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Note how quickly you are plunged into the action of the story. After reading the first four paragraphs what have you learned about the chief character, the minor characters, the setting, the complication? Give specific words, phrases, or sentences in your answer.
2. What element do the French names contribute to this story? We have in this story a good example of economical use of direct description in giving setting. Show that this is true.
3. Point out sentences which give the past history of Tedge, sentences or phrases which mention details of his personal appearance, and still others which definitely characterize him. What have these to do with your feeling for Tedge at the end? Contrast the attitude of Tedge toward the cargo of cattle with that of Milt Rogers. Explain clearly Tedge's scheme in firing the boat. After knocking Rogers down among the cattle, Tedge "wondered if he should go finish the job." Would there have been a story if he had done so?
4. What is meant by Nemesis? How can this be called a story of Nemesis? Read *They Grind Exceeding Small*, by

Ben Ames Williams, and discuss the use of Nemesis in that story. What is the significance of its closing lines, "I knew now that a just and brooding God dwelt among these hills." How could these lines be rewritten to apply to *The Man Who Cursed the Lilies?*

5. *The Man Who Cursed the Lilies*, was one of the O. Henry Prize stories of 1921. One of the judges says, "The Committee value the narrative for the power and intensity of its subject-matter, for its novel theme, for its familiar, yet seldom-used setting, for its poetic justice, and for its fulfillment of short story structural laws." Discuss this statement with specific illustrations from the story.
6. One pupil says of this story, "When I read *The Man Who Cursed the Lilies*, I was reminded of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*." Do you agree with him?

Other stories of dramatic action:

The Snake Doctor — Irvin S. Cobb
The Horse of Hurricane Reef — Charles Tenney Jackson
Mateo Falcone — Prosper Mérimée
The Ambitious Guest — Nathaniel Hawthorne
The Cask of Amontillado — Edgar Allan Poe
The Red Mark — John Russell
In the Matter of a Private — Rudyard Kipling
The Man Who Would be King — Rudyard Kipling

"A SOURCE OF IRRITATION"[1]

By STACY AUMONIER

To look at old Sam Gates you would never suspect him of having nerves. His sixty-nine years of close application to the needs of the soil had given him a certain earthy stolidity. To observe him hoeing, or thinning out a broad field of turnips, hardly attracted one's attention, he seemed so much part and parcel of the whole scheme. He blended into the soil like a glorified swede. Nevertheless, the half-dozen people who claimed his acquaintance knew him to be a man who suffered from little moods of irritability.

And on this glorious morning a little incident annoyed him unreasonably. It concerned his niece Aggie. She was a plump girl with clear, blue eyes, and a face as round and inexpressive as the dumplings for which the county was famous. She came slowly across the long sweep of the downland and, putting down the bundle wrapped in a red handkerchief which contained his breakfast and dinner, she said:

"Well, Uncle, is there any noos?"

Now, this may not appear to the casual reader to be a remark likely to cause irritation, but it affected old Sam Gates as a very silly and unnecessary question. It was, moreover, the constant repetition of it which was beginning to anger him. He met his niece twice a day. In the morning she brought his bundle of food at seven, and when he passed his sister's cottage on the way home to tea at five she was invariably hanging about the gate, and she always said in the same voice:

"Well, Uncle, is there any noos?"

[1] From "Golden Windmill," by Stacy Aumonier. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, the American publishers, and of Hutchinson and Company, the English publishers.

Noos! What noos should there be? For sixty-nine years he had never lived farther than five miles from Halvesham. For nearly sixty of those years he had bent his back above the soil. There were, indeed, historic occasions. Once, for instance, when he had married Annie Hachet. And there was the birth of his daughter. There was also a famous occasion when he had visited London. Once he had been to a flower-show at Market Roughborough. He either went or didn't go to church on Sundays. He had many interesting chats with Mr. James at the Cowman, and three years ago had sold a pig to Mrs. Way. But he couldn't always have interesting noos of this sort up his sleeve. Didn't the silly zany know that for the last three weeks he had been hoeing and thinning out turnips for Mr. Hodge on this very same field? What noos could there be?

He blinked at his niece, and didn't answer. She undid the parcel and said:

"Mrs. Goping's fowl got out again last night."

"Ah," he replied in a non-committal manner and began to munch his bread and bacon. His niece picked up the handkerchief and, humming to herself, walked back across the field.

It was a glorious morning, and a white sea mist added to the promise of a hot day. He sat there munching, thinking of nothing in particular, but gradually subsiding into a mood of placid content. He noticed the back of Aggie disappear in the distance. It was a mile to the cottage and a mile and a half to Halvesham. Silly things, girls. They were all alike. One had to make allowances. He dismissed her from his thoughts, and took a long swig of tea out of a bottle. Insects buzzed lazily. He tapped his pocket to assure himself that his pouch of shag was there, and then he continued munching. When he had finished, he lighted his pipe and stretched himself comfortably. He looked along the line of turnips he had thinned and then across the adjoining field of swedes.

Silver streaks appeared on the sea below the mist. In some dim way he felt happy in his solitude amidst this sweeping immensity of earth and sea and sky.

And then something else came to irritate him: it was one of "these dratted airyplanes." "Airyplanes" were his pet aversion. He could find nothing to be said in their favor. Nasty, noisy, disfiguring things that seared the heavens and made the earth dangerous. And every day there seemed to be more and more of them. Of course "this old war" was responsible for a lot of them, he knew. The war was a "plaguy noosance." They were short-handed on the farm, beer and tobacco were dear, and Mrs. Steven's nephew had been and got wounded in the foot.

He turned his attention once more to the turnips; but an "airyplane" has an annoying genius for gripping one's attention. When it appears on the scene, however much we dislike it, it has a way of taking the stage-center. We cannot help constantly looking at it. And so it was with old Sam Gates. He spat on his hands and blinked up at the sky. And suddenly the aeroplane behaved in a very extraordinary manner. It was well over the sea when it seemed to lurch drunkenly and skimmed the water. Then it shot up at a dangerous angle and zigzagged. It started to go farther out, and then turned and made for the land. The engines were making a curious grating noise. It rose once more, and then suddenly dived downward, and came plump down right in the middle of Mr. Hodge's field of swedes.

And then, as if not content with this desecration, it ran along the ground, ripping and tearing up twenty-five yards of good swedes, and then came to a stop.

Old Sam Gates was in a terrible state. The aeroplane was more than a hundred yards away, but he waved his arms and called out:

"Hi, you there, you mustn't land in they swedes! They're Mister Hodge's."

The instant the aeroplane stopped, a man leaped out

and gazed quickly round. He glanced at Sam Gates, and seemed uncertain whether to address him or whether to concentrate his attention on the flying-machine. The latter arrangement appeared to be his ultimate decision. He dived under the engine and became frantically busy. Sam had never seen any one work with such furious energy; but all the same it was not to be tolerated. It was disgraceful. Sam started out across the field, almost hurrying in his indignation. When he appeared within earshot of the aviator he cried out again:

"Hi! you mustn't rest your old airyplane here! You've kicked up all Mr. Hodge's swedes. A noice thing you've done!"

He was within five yards when suddenly the aviator turned and covered him with a revolver! And speaking in a sharp, staccato voice, he said:

"Old Grandfather, you must sit down. I am very much occupied. If you interfere or attempt to go away, I shoot you. So!"

Sam gazed at the horrid, glittering little barrel and gasped. Well, he never! To be threatened with murder when you're doing your duty in your employer's private property! But, still, perhaps the man was mad. A man must be more or less mad to go up in one of those crazy things. And life was very sweet on that summer morning despite sixty-nine years. He sat down among the swedes.

The aviator was so busy with his cranks and machinery that he hardly deigned to pay him any attention except to keep the revolver handy. He worked feverishly, and Sam sat watching him. At the end of ten minutes he appeared to have solved his troubles with the machine, but he still seemed very scared. He kept on glancing round and out to sea. When his repairs were complete he straightened his back and wiped the perspiration from his brow. He was apparently on the point of springing back into the machine and going off when a sudden mood of facetiousness, caused by relief from the strain he had

endured, came to him. He turned to old Sam and smiled, at the same time remarking:

"Well, old Grandfather, and now we shall be all right, isn't it?"

He came close up to Sam, and then suddenly started back.

"*Gott!*" he cried, "Paul Jouperts!"

Bewildered, Sam gazed at him, and the madman started talking to him in some foreign tongue. Sam shook his head.

"You no right," he remarked, "to come bargin' through they swedes of Mr. Hodge's."

And then the aviator behaved in a most peculiar manner. He came up and examined Sam's face very closely, and gave a sudden tug at his beard and hair, as if to see whether they were real or false.

"What is your name, old man?" he said.

"Sam Gates."

The aviator muttered some words that sounded something like "mare vudish," and then turned to his machine. He appeared to be dazed and in a great state of doubt. He fumbled with some cranks, but kept glancing at old Sam. At last he got into the car and strapped himself in. Then he stopped, and sat there deep in thought. At last he suddenly unstrapped himself and sprang out again and, approaching Sam, said very deliberately:

"Old Grandfather, I shall require you to accompany me."

Sam gasped.

"Eh!" he said. "What be talkin' about? 'Company? I got these 'ere loines o' turnips — I be already behoind —" The disgusting little revolver once more flashed before his eyes.

"There must be no discussion," came the voice. "It is necessary that you mount the seat of the car without delay. Otherwise I shoot you like the dog you are. So!"

Old Sam was hale and hearty. He had no desire to die

so ignominiously. The pleasant smell of the Norfolk downland was in his nostrils; his foot was on his native heath. He mounted the seat of the car, contenting himself with a mutter:

"Well, that be a noice thing, I must say! Flyin' about the country with all they turnips on'y half thinned!"

He found himself strapped in. The aviator was in a fever of anxiety to get away. The engines made a ghastly splutter and noise. The thing started running along the ground. Suddenly it shot upward, giving the swedes a last contemptuous kick. At twenty minutes to eight that morning old Sam found himself being borne right up above his fields and out to sea! His breath came quickly. He was a little frightened.

"God forgive me!" he murmured.

The thing was so fantastic and sudden that his mind could not grasp it. He only felt in some vague way that he was going to die, and he struggled to attune his mind to the change. He offered up a mild prayer to God, Who, he felt, must be very near, somewhere up in these clouds. Automatically he thought of the vicar at Halvesham, and a certain sense of comfort came to him at the reflection that on the previous day he had taken a "cooking of runner beans" to God's representative in that village. He felt calmer after that, but the horrid machine seemed to go higher and higher. He could not turn in his seat and he could see nothing but sea and sky. Of course the man was mad, mad as a March hare. Of what earthly use could *he* be to any one? Besides, he had talked pure gibberish, and called him Paul something, when he had already told him that his name was Sam. The thing would fall down into the sea soon, and they would both be drowned. Well, well, he had almost reached three-score years and ten. He was protected by a screen, but it seemed very cold. What on earth would Mr. Hodge say? There was no one left to work the land but a fool of a boy named Billy Whitehead at Dene's Cross. On, on, on they went at a furious

pace. His thoughts danced disconnectedly from incidents of his youth, conversations with the vicar, hearty meals in the open, a frock his sister wore on the day of the postman's wedding, the drone of a psalm, the illness of some ewes belonging to Mr. Hodge. Everything seemed to be moving very rapidly, upsetting his sense of time. He felt outraged, and yet at moments there was something entrancing in the wild experience. He seemed to be living at an incredible pace. Perhaps he was really dead and on his way to the kingdom of God. Perhaps this was the way they took people.

After some indefinite period he suddenly caught sight of a long strip of land. Was this a foreign country, or were they returning? He had by this time lost all feeling of fear. He became interested and almost disappointed. The "airypiane" was not such a fool as it looked. It was very wonderful to be right up in the sky like this. His dreams were suddenly disturbed by a fearful noise. He thought the machine was blown to pieces. It dived and ducked through the air, and things were bursting all round it and making an awful din, and then it went up higher and higher. After a while these noises ceased, and he felt the machine gliding downward. They were really right above solid land — trees, fields, streams, and white villages. Down, down, down they glided. This was a foreign country. There were straight avenues of poplars and canals. This was not Halvesham. He felt the thing glide gently and bump into a field. Some men ran forward and approached them, and the mad aviator called out to them. They were mostly fat men in gray uniforms, and they all spoke this foreign gibberish. Some one came and unstrapped him. He was very stiff and could hardly move. An exceptionally gross-looking man punched him in the ribs and roared with laughter. They all stood round and laughed at him, while the mad aviator talked to them and kept pointing at him. Then he said:

"Old Grandfather, you must come with me."

He was led to an iron-roofed building and shut in a little room. There were guards outside with fixed bayonets. After a while the mad aviator appeared again, accompanied by two soldiers. He beckoned him to follow. They marched through a quadrangle and entered another building. They went straight into an office where a very important-looking man, covered with medals, sat in an easy-chair. There was a lot of saluting and clicking of heels. The aviator pointed at Sam and said something, and the man with the medals started at sight of him, and then came up and spoke to him in English.

"What is your name? Where do you come from? Your age? The name and birthplace of your parents?"

He seemed intensely interested, and also pulled his hair and beard to see if they came off. So well and naturally did he and the aviator speak English that after a voluble examination they drew apart, and continued the conversation in that language. And the extraordinary conversation was of this nature:

"It is a most remarkable resemblance," said the man with medals. "*Unglaublich!* But what do you want me to do with him, Hausemann?"

"The idea came to me suddenly, Excellency," replied the aviator, "and you may consider it worthless. It is just this. The resemblance is so amazing. Paul Jouperts has given us more valuable information than any one at present in our service, and the English know that. There is an award of five thousand francs on his head. Twice they have captured him, and each time he escaped. All the company commanders and their staff have his photograph. He is a serious thorn in their flesh."

"Well?" replied the man with the medals.

The aviator whispered confidentially:

"Suppose, your Excellency, that they found the dead body of Paul Jouperts?"

"Well?" replied the big man.

"My suggestion is this. To-morrow, as you know, the

English are attacking Hill 701, which for tactical reasons we have decided to evacuate. If after the attack they find the dead body of Paul Jouperts in, say, the second line, they will take no further trouble in the matter. You know their lack of thoroughness. Pardon me, I was two years at Oxford University. And consequently Paul Jouperts will be able to prosecute his labors undisturbed."

The man with the medals twirled his mustache and looked thoughtfully at his colleague.

"Where is Paul at the moment?" he asked.

"He is acting as a gardener at the Convent of St. Eloise, at Mailleton-en-haut, which, as you know, is one hundred meters from the headquarters of the British central army staff."

The man with the medals took two or three rapid turns up and down the room, then he said:

"Your plan is excellent, Hausemann. The only point of difficulty is that the attack started this morning."

"This morning?" exclaimed the other.

"Yes; the English attacked unexpectedly at dawn. We have already evacuated the first line. We shall evacuate the second line at eleven-fifty. It is now ten-fifteen. There may be just time."

He looked suddenly at old Sam in the way that a butcher might look at a prize heifer at an agricultural show and remarked casually:

"Yes, it is a remarkable resemblance. It seems a pity not to — do something with it."

Then, speaking in German, he added:

"It is worth trying. And if it succeeds the higher authorities shall hear of your lucky accident and inspiration, Herr Hausemann. Instruct *Ober-lieutenant* Schultz to send the old fool by two orderlies to the east extremity of Trench 38. Keep him there till the order of evacuation is given, then shoot him, but don't disfigure him, and lay him out face upward."

The aviator saluted and withdrew, accompanied by his

victim. Old Sam had not understood the latter part of the conversation, and he did not catch quite all that was said in English; but he felt that somehow things were not becoming too promising, and it was time to assert himself. So he remarked when they got outside:

"Now, look 'ee 'ere, Mister, when am I goin' to get back to my turnips?"

And the aviator replied, with a pleasant smile:

"Do not be disturbed, old Grandfather. You shall get back to the soil quite soon."

In a few moments he found himself in a large gray car, accompanied by four soldiers. The aviator left him. The country was barren and horrible, full of great pits and rents, and he could hear the roar of the artillery and the shriek of shells. Overhead, aeroplanes were buzzing angrily. He seemed to be suddenly transported from the kingdom of God to the pit of darkness. He wondered whether the vicar had enjoyed the runner beans. He could not imagine runner beans growing here; runner beans, aye, or anything else. If this was a foreign country, give him dear old England!

Gr-r-r! bang! Something exploded just at the rear of the car. The soldiers ducked, and one of them pushed him in the stomach and swore.

"An ugly-looking lout," he thought. "If I wor twenty years younger, I'd give him a punch in the eye that 'u'd make him sit up."

The car came to a halt by a broken wall. The party hurried out and dived behind a mound. He was pulled down a kind of shaft, and found himself in a room buried right underground, where three officers were drinking and smoking. The soldiers saluted and handed them a typewritten despatch. The officers looked at him drunkenly, and one came up and pulled his beard and spat in his face and called him "an old English swine." He then shouted out some instructions to the soldiers, and they led him out into the narrow trench. One walked behind him, and

occasionally prodded him with the butt-end of a gun. The trenches were half full of water and reeked of gases, powder, and decaying matter. Shells were constantly bursting overhead, and in places the trenches had crumbled and were nearly blocked up. They stumbled on, sometimes falling, sometimes dodging moving masses, and occasionally crawling over the dead bodies of men. At last they reached a deserted-looking trench, and one of the soldiers pushed him into the corner of it and growled something, and then disappeared round the angle. Old Sam was exhausted. He leaned panting against the mud wall, expecting every minute to be blown to pieces by one of those infernal things that seemed to be getting more and more insistent. The din went on for nearly twenty minutes, and he was alone in the trench. He fancied he heard a whistle amidst the din. Suddenly one of the soldiers who had accompanied him came stealthily round the corner, and there was a look in his eye old Sam did not like. When he was within five yards the soldier raised his rifle and pointed it at Sam's body. Some instinct impelled the old man at that instant to throw himself forward on his face. As he did so he was aware of a terrible explosion, and he had just time to observe the soldier falling in a heap near him, and then he lost consciousness.

His consciousness appeared to return to him with a snap. He was lying on a plank in a building, and he heard some one say:

"I believe the old boy's English."

He looked round. There were a lot of men lying there, and others in khaki and white overalls were busy among them. He sat up, rubbed his head, and said:

"Hi, Mister, where be I now?"

Some one laughed, and a young man came up and said:

"Well, old man, you were very nearly in hell. Who the devil are you?"

Some one came up, and two of them were discussing him. One of them said:

"He's quite all right. He was only knocked out. Better take him in to the colonel. He may be a spy."

The other came up, touched his shoulder, and remarked:

"Can you walk, Uncle?"

He replied:

"Aye, I can walk all roight."

"That's an old sport!"

The young man took his arm and helped him out of the room into a courtyard. They entered another room, where an elderly, kind-faced officer was seated at a desk. The officer looked up and exclaimed:

"Good God! Bradshaw, do you know who you've got there?"

The younger one said:

"No. Who, sir?"

"It's Paul Jouperts!" exclaimed the colonel.

"Paul Jouperts! Great Scott!"

The older officer addressed himself to Sam. He said:

"Well, we've got you once more, Paul. We shall have to be a little more careful this time."

The young officer said:

"Shall I detail a squad, sir?"

"We can't shoot him without a courtmartial," replied the kind-faced senior.

Then Sam interpolated:

"Look 'ee 'ere, sir, I'm fair' sick of all this. My name bean't Paul. My name's Sam. I was a-thinnin' a loine o' turnips ——"

Both officers burst out laughing, and the younger one said:

"Good! damn good! Isn't it amazing, sir, the way they not only learn the language, but even take the trouble to learn a dialect!"

The older man busied himself with some papers.

"Well, Sam," he remarked, "you shall be given a chance to prove your identity. Our methods are less drastic than those of your *Boche* masters. What part of England are

you supposed to come from? Let's see how much you can bluff us with your topographical knowledge."

"I was a-thinnin' a loine o' turnips this mornin' at 'alf-past seven on Mr. Hodge's farm at Halvesham when one o' these 'ere airyplanes came down among the swedes. I tells 'e to get clear o' that, when the feller what gets out o' the car 'e drahs a revowlver and 'e says, 'You must 'company I ——'"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the senior officer, "that's all very good. Now tell me — where is Halvesham? What is the name of the local vicar? I'm sure you'd know that."

Old Sam rubbed his chin.

"I sits under the Reverend David Pryce, Mister, and a good, God-fearin' man he be. I took him a cookin' o' runner beans on'y yesterday. I works for Mr. Hodge, what owns Greenway Manor and 'as a stud-farm at Newmarket, they say."

"Charles Hodge?" asked the young officer.

"Aye, Charlie Hodge. You write and ask un if he knows old Sam Gates."

The two officers looked at each other, and the older one looked at Sam more closely.

"It's very extraordinary," he remarked.

"Everybody knows Charlie Hodge," added the younger officer.

It was at that moment that a wave of genius swept over old Sam. He put his hand to his head and suddenly jerked out:

"What's more, I can tell 'ee where this yere Paul is. He's actin' a gardener in a convent ——" He puckered up his brows, fumbled with his hat, and then got out, "Mighteno."

The older officer gasped.

"Mailleton-en-haut! Good God! what makes you say that, old man?"

Sam tried to give an account of his experience and the things he had heard said by the German officers; but he

was getting tired, and he broke off in the middle to say:

"Ye haven't a bite o' somethin' to eat, I suppose, Mister; or a glass o' beer? I usually 'as my dinner at twelve o'clock."

Both the officers laughed, and the older said:

"Get him some food, Bradshaw, and a bottle of beer from the mess. We'll keep this old man here. He interests me."

While the younger man was doing this, the chief pressed a button and summoned another junior officer.

"Gateshead," he remarked, "ring up the G.H.Q. and instruct them to arrest the gardener in that convent at the top of the hill and then to report."

The officer saluted and went out, and in a few minutes a tray of hot food and a large bottle of beer were brought to the old man, and he was left alone in the corner of the room to negotiate his welcome compensation. And in the execution he did himself and his country credit. In the meanwhile the officers were very busy. People were coming and going and examining maps, and telephone bells were ringing furiously. They did not disturb old Sam's gastric operations. He cleaned up the mess tins and finished the last drop of beer. The senior officer found time to offer him a cigarette, but he replied:

"Thank 'ee kindly, sir, but I'd rather smoke my pipe."

The colonel smiled and said:

"Oh, all right; smoke away."

He lighted up, and the fumes of the shag permeated the room. Some one opened another window, and the young officer who had addressed him at first suddenly looked at him and exclaimed:

"Innocent, by God! You couldn't get shag like that anywhere but in Norfolk."

It must have been an hour later when another officer entered and saluted.

"Message from the G.H.Q., sir," he said.

"Well?"

"They have arrested the gardener at the convent of St. Eloise, and they have every reason to believe that he is the notorious Paul Jouperts."

The colonel stood up, and his eyes beamed. He came over to old Sam and shook his hand.

"Mr. Gates," he said, "you are an old brick. You will probably hear more of this. You have probably been the means of delivering something very useful into our hands. Your own honor is vindicated. A loving Government will probably award you five shillings or a Victoria Cross or something of that sort. In the meantime, what can I do for you?"

Old Sam scratched his chin.

"I want to get back 'ome," he said.

"Well, even that might be arranged."

"I want to get back 'ome in toime for tea."

"What time do you have tea?"

"Foive o'clock or thereabouts."

"I see."

A kindly smile came into the eyes of the colonel. He turned to another officer standing by the table and said:

"Raikes, is any one going across this afternoon with despatches?"

"Yes, sir," replied the other officer. "Commander Jennings is leaving at three o'clock."

"You might ask him if he could see me."

Within ten minutes a young man in a flight-commander's uniform entered.

"Ah, Jennings," said the colonel, "here is a little affair which concerns the honor of the British army. My friend here, Sam Gates, has come over from Halvesham, in Norfolk, in order to give us valuable information. I have promised him that he shall get home to tea at five o'clock. Can you take a passenger?"

The young man threw back his head and laughed.

"Lord!" he exclaimed, "what an old sport! Yes, I expect I can manage it. Where is the God-forsaken place?"

A large ordnance-map of Norfolk (which had been captured from a German officer) was produced, and the young man studied it closely.

At three o'clock precisely old Sam, finding himself something of a hero and quite glad to escape from the embarrassment which the position entailed upon him, once more sped skyward in a "dratted airyplane."

At twenty minutes to five he landed once more among Mr. Hodge's swedes. The breezy young airman shook hands with him and departed inland. Old Sam sat down and surveyed the familiar field of turnips.

"A noice thing, I must say!" he muttered to himself as he looked along the lines of unthinned turnips. He still had twenty minutes, and so he went slowly along and completed a line which he had begun in the morning. He then deliberately packed up his dinner-things and his tools and started out for home.

As he came round the corner of Stillway's meadow and the cottage came in view, his niece stepped out of the copse with a basket on her arm.

"Well, Uncle," she said, "is there any noos?"

It was then that old Sam really lost his temper.

"Noos!" he said. "Noos! Drat the girl! What noos should there be? Sixty-nine year' I live in these 'ere parts, hoein' and weedin' and thinnin', and mindin' Charlie Hodge's sheep. Am I one o' these 'ere story-book folk havin' noos 'appen to me all the time? Ain't it enough, ye silly, dab-faced zany, to earn enough to buy a bite o' some'at to eat and a glass o' beer and a place to rest a's head o' night without always wantin' noos, noos, noos! I tell 'ee it's this that leads 'ee to 'alf the troubles in the world. Devil take the noos!"

And turning his back on her, he went fuming up the hill.

STACY AUMONIER

STACY AUMONIER, although an English writer, is well known to American readers through his frequent contributions to Ameri-

can periodicals. He was born in 1887, and inherited from his father, who was an architectural sculptor, a talent for art which has greatly influenced his life. He began his career as a decorative designer and landscape painter, and gained such distinction in this field that his work was given a place in the exhibits of the Royal Academy. In 1908 he turned to another form of art and for a time acted parts at various London theaters besides giving successful recitals of original character sketches. Since he began writing for publication in 1913, he has produced five novels and several volumes of short stories. He modestly acknowledges his indebtedness to the older short story writers and claims for himself the title of craftsman only, but his stories possess an originality and distinction of style which win for him a much higher rank.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Some war stories have only a fleeting lifetime; they lose their appeal when the occupations of peace succeed the excitement of war. But others, built upon the sure foundation of universal truth, lose nothing in the passage of time. *The Last Class*, by Alphonse Daudet, is such a story. Although it grew out of the situation in Alsace-Lorraine after the war in 1870, it gains permanence through its appeal to a fundamental emotion, love of language and country. *The Source of Irritation* is also a war story; but its enduring quality is the essential humor of the situation. In Sam Gates we recognize a real creation, the laconic, inexpressive English countryman, as truly a product of the soil as the turnip or swede which he cultivates. A day of adventure which would leave a more imaginative person faint with wonder and excitement is to him merely "a source of irritation."
2. What picture do you get of Sam Gates in the first paragraph? What do you learn of his disposition? Compare Sam Gates's state of mind while he munches his lunch with his thoughts as he crosses the Channel in the "dratted airyplane." Why is he so glad of his gift to the vicar? What "foreign gibberish" does the mad aviator speak? What is his purpose in making Gates accompany him? Why does his plan fall through? What are Sam Gates's

feelings at finding himself "something of a hero"? Note how he answers Aggie's usual question that evening.

3. Have you read any other stories of mistaken identity? How does Gates finally establish his identity beyond a doubt?
4. The humor of the story lies largely in the contrasts. Note the contrast between the gravity of Gates's position when captured by the English and his first words upon awakening; between his humble interest in his turnips and the tragedy of war; between the crowded events of his day and his answer to Aggie at the end.
5. Write a theme in which a young English officer tells a friend of the odd old countryman who smoked Norfolk shag and preferred to "get back 'ome in toime for tea" rather than receive "five shillings or a Victoria Cross" from a grateful government.
6. Read *The Last Class*, by Daudet. With what single impression does this story leave the reader? Discuss the reasons for its lasting popularity as a story.

Stories with a humorous appeal:

A Good Action — Stacy Aumonier
Miss Bracegirdle Does Her Duty — Stacy Aumonier
The Third Ingredient — O. Henry
The Tenor — H. C. Bunner
The Pope's Mule — Alphonse Daudet
Pigs Is Pigs — Ellis Parker Butler
The Love Letters of Smith — H. C. Bunner

THE DOCTOR OF AFTERNOON ARM

By NORMAN DUNCAN

It was March weather. There was sunshine and thaw. Anxious Bight was caught over with rotten ice from Ragged Run Harbor to the heads of Afternoon Arm. A rumor of seals on the Arctic drift ice off shore had come in from the Spotted Horses. It inspired instant haste in all the cottages of Ragged Run — an eager, stumbling haste. In Bad-Weather Tom West's kitchen, somewhat after ten o'clock in the morning, in the midst of this hilarious scramble to be off to the floe, there was a flash and spit of fire, and the clap of an explosion, and the clatter of a sealing-gun on the bare floor; and in the breathless, dead little interval between the appalling detonation and a man's groan of dismay followed by a woman's choke and scream of terror, Dolly West, Bad-Weather Tom's small maid, stood swaying, wreathed in gray smoke, her little hands pressed tight to her eyes.

She was — or rather had been — a pretty little creature. There had been yellow curls — in the Newfoundland way — and rosy cheeks and grave blue eyes; but now of all this shy, fair loveliness ——

"You've killed her!"

"No — no!"

Dolly dropped her hands. She reached out, then, for something to grasp. And she plainted: "I ithn't dead, mother. I juth — I juth can't thee." She extended her hands. They were discolored, and there was a slow, red drip. "They're all wet!" she complained.

By this time the mother had the little girl gathered close in her arms. She moaned: "The doctor!"

Terry West caught up his cap and mittens and sprang to the door.

"Not by the Bight!" Bad-Weather shouted.

"No, sir."

Dolly West whimpered: "It thmart-th, mother!"

"By Mad Harry an' Thank-the-Lord!"

"Ay, sir."

Dolly screamed — now: "It hurt-th! Oh, oh, it hurt-th!"

"An' haste, lad!"

"Ay, sir."

There was no doctor in Ragged Run Harbor; there was a doctor at Afternoon Arm, however — across Anxious Bight. Terry West avoided the rotten ice of the Bight and took the 'longshore trail by way of Mad Harry and Thank-the-Lord. At noon he was past Mad Harry, his little legs wearing well and his breath coming easily through his expanded nostrils. He had not paused; and at four o'clock — still on a dogtrot — he had hauled down the chimney smoke of Thank-the-Lord and was bearing up for Afternoon Arm.

Early dusk caught him short-cutting the doubtful ice of Thank-the-Lord Cove; and half an hour later, midway of the passage to Afternoon Arm, with two miles left to accomplish — dusk falling thick and cold, then, a frosty wind blowing — Creep Head of the Arm looming black and solid — he dropped through the ice and vanished.

Returning from a professional call at Tumble Tickle in clean, sunlit weather, with nothing more tedious than eighteen miles of wilderness trail and rough floe ice behind him, Doctor Rolfe was chagrined to discover himself fagged out. He had come heartily down the trail from Tumble Tickle, but on the ice in the shank of the day — there had been eleven miles of the floe — he had lagged and complained under what was indubitably the weight of his sixty-three years. He was slightly perturbed. He had been fagged out before, to be sure. A man cannot practice medicine out of a Newfoundland outport harbor for

thirty-seven years and not know what it means to stomach a physical exhaustion. It was not that. What perturbed Doctor Rolfe was the singular coincidence of a touch of melancholy with the ominous complaint of his lean old legs.

And presently there was a more disquieting revelation. In the drear, frosty dusk, when he rounded Creep Head, opened the lights of Afternoon Arm, and caught the warm, yellow gleam of the lamp in the surgery window, his expectation ran all at once to his supper and his bed. He was hungry — that was true. Sleepy? No; he was not sleepy. Yet he wanted to go to bed. Why? He wanted to go to bed in the way that old men want to go to bed — less to sleep than just to sigh and stretch out and rest. And this anxious wish for bed — just to stretch out and rest — held its definite implication. It was more than symptomatic — it was shocking.

"That's age!"

It was.

"Hereafter, as an old man should," Doctor Rolfe resolved, "I go with caution and I take my ease."

And it was in this determination that Doctor Rolfe opened the surgery door and came gratefully into the warmth and light and familiar odors of the little room. Caution was the wisdom and privilege of age, wasn't it? he reflected after supper in the glow of the surgery fire. There was no shame in it, was there? Did duty require of a man that he should practice medicine out of Afternoon Arm for thirty-seven years — in all sorts of weather and along a hundred and thirty miles of the worst coast in the world — and go recklessly into a future of increasing inadequacy? It did not! He had stood his watch. What did he owe life? Nothing — nothing! He had paid in full. Well, then, what did life owe him? It owed him something, didn't it? Didn't life owe him at least an old age of reasonable ease and self-respecting independence? It did!

By this time the more he reflected, warming his lean, aching shanks the while, the more he dwelt upon the bitter incidents of that one hundred and thirty miles of harsh coast, through the thirty-seven years he had managed to survive the winds and seas and frosts of it; and the more he dwelt upon his straitened circumstances and increasing age the more petulant he grew.

It was in such moods as this that Doctor Rolfe was accustomed to recall the professional services he had rendered and to dispatch bills therefor; and now he fumbled through the litter of his old desk for pen and ink, drew a dusty, yellowing sheaf of statements of accounts from a dusty pigeonhole, and set himself to work, fuming and grumbling all the while. "I'll tilt the fee!" he determined. This was to be the new policy — to "tilt the fee," to demand payment, to go with caution; in this way to provide for an old age of reasonable ease and self-respecting independence. And Doctor Rolfe began to make out statements of accounts due for services rendered.

From this labor and petulant reflection Doctor Rolfe was withdrawn by a tap on the surgery door. He called "Come in!" with no heart for the event. It was no night to be abroad on the ice. Yet the tap could mean but one thing — somebody was in trouble; and as he called "Come in!" and looked up from the statement of account, and while he waited for the door to open, his pen poised and his face in a pucker of trouble, he considered the night and wondered what strength was left in his lean old legs.

A youngster — he had been dripping wet and was now sparkling all over with frost and ice — intruded.

"Thank-the-Lord Cove?"

"No, sir."

"Mad Harry?"

"Ragged Run, sir."

"Bad-Weather West's lad?"

"Yes, sir."

"Been in the water?"

The boy grinned. He was ashamed of himself. "Yes, sir. I falled through the ice, sir."

"Come across the Bight?"

The boy stared. "No, sir. A cat couldn't cross the Bight the night, sir. 'Tis all rotten. I come alongshore by Mad Harry an' Thank-the-Lord. I dropped through all of a sudden, sir, in Thank-the-Lord Cove."

"Who's sick?"

"Pop's gun went off, sir."

Doctor Rolfe rose. "'Pop's gun went off!' Who was in the way?"

"Dolly, sir."

"And Dolly in the way! And Dolly ——"

"She've gone blind, sir. An' her cheek, sir — an' one ear, sir ——"

"What's the night?"

"Blowin' up, sir. There's a scud. An' the moon ——"

"You didn't cross the Bight? Why not?"

"'Tis rotten from shore t' shore. I'd not try the Bight, sir, the night."

"No?"

"No, sir." The boy was very grave.

"Mm-m."

All this while Doctor Rolfe had been moving about the surgery in sure haste — packing a waterproof case with little instruments and vials and whatnot. And now he got quickly into his boots and jacket, pulled down his coonskin cap, pulled up his sealskin gloves, handed Bad-Weather West's boy over to his housekeeper for supper and bed (he was a bachelor man), and closed the surgery door upon himself.

Doctor Rolfe took to the harbor ice and drove head down into the gale. There were ten miles to go. It was to be a night's work. He settled himself doggedly. It was heroic. In the circumstances, however, this aspect

of the night's work was not stimulating to a tired old man. It was a mile and a half to Creep Head, where Afternoon Tickle led a narrow way from the shelter of Afternoon Arm to Anxious Bight and the open sea; and from the lee of Creep Head — a straightaway across Anxious Bight — it was nine miles to Blow-me-Down Dick of Ragged Run Harbor. And Doctor Rolfe had rested but three hours. And he was old.

Impatient to revive the accustomed comfort and glow of strength be began to run. When he came to Creep Head and there paused to survey Anxious Bight in a flash of the moon, he was tingling and warm and limber and eager. Yet he was dismayed by the prospect. No man could cross from Creep Head to Blow-me-Down Dick of Ragged Run Harbor in the dark. Doctor Rolfe considered the light. Communicating masses of ragged cloud were driving low across Anxious Bight. Offshore there was a sluggish bank of black cloud. The moon was risen and full. It was obscured. The intervals of light were less than the intervals of shadow. Sometimes a wide, impenetrable cloud, its edges alight, darkened the moon altogether. Still, there was light enough. All that was definitely ominous was the bank of black cloud lying sluggishly offshore. The longer Doctor Rolfe contemplated its potentiality for catastrophe the more he feared it.

"If I were to be overtaken by snow!"

It was blowing high. There was the bite and shiver of frost in the wind. Half a gale ran in from the open sea. Midway of Anxious Bight it would be a saucy, hampering, stinging head wind. And beyond Creep Head the ice was in doubtful condition. A man might conjecture; that was all. It was mid-spring. Freezing weather had of late alternated with periods of thaw and rain. There had been windy days. Anxious Bight had even once been clear of ice. A westerly wind had broken the ice and swept it out beyond the heads. In a gale from the north-

east, however, these fragments had returned with accumulations of Arctic pans and hummocks from the Labrador current; and a frosty night had caught them together and sealed them to the cliffs of the coast. It was a most delicate attachment — one pan to the other and the whole to the rocks. It had yielded somewhat — it must have gone rotten — in the weather of that day. What the frost had accomplished since dusk could be determined only upon trial.

"Soft as cheese!" Doctor Rolfe concluded. "Rubber ice and air holes!"

There was another way to Ragged Run — the way by which Terry West had come. It skirted the shore of Anxious Bight — Mad Harry and Thank-the-Lord and Little Harbor Deep — and something more than multiplied the distance by one and a half. Doctor Rolfe was completely aware of the difficulties of Anxious Bight — the way from Afternoon Arm to Ragged Run; the treacherous reaches of young ice, bending under the weight of a man; the veiled black water; the labor, the crevices, the snow crust of the Arctic pans and hummocks; and the broken field and wash of the sea beyond the lesser island of the Spotted Horses. And he knew, too, the issue of the disappearance of the moon, the desperate plight into which the sluggish bank of black cloud might plunge a man. As a matter of unromantic fact he desired greatly to decline a passage of Anxious Bight that night.

Instead he moved out and shaped a course for the black bulk of the Spotted Horses. This was in the direction of Blow-me-Down Dick of Ragged Run, and the open sea.

He sighed. "If I had a son——" he reflected.

Well, now, Doctor Rolfe was a Newfoundlander. He was used to traveling all sorts of ice in all sorts of weather. The returning fragments of the ice of Anxious Bight had been close packed for two miles beyond the narrows of Afternoon Arm by the northeast gale which had driven

them back from the open. This was rough ice. In the press of the wind the drifting floe had buckled. It had been a big gale. Under the whip of it the ice had come down with a rush. And when it encountered the coast the first great pans had been thrust out of the sea by the weight of the floe behind. A slow pressure had even driven them up the cliffs of Creep Head and heaped them in a tumble below. It was thus a folded, crumpled floe, a vast field of broken bergs and pans at angles.

No Newfoundlander would adventure on the ice without a gaff. A gaff is a lithe, ironshod pole, eight or ten feet in length. Doctor Rolfe was as cunning and sure with a gaff as any old hand of the sealing fleet. He employed it now to advantage. It was a vaulting pole. He walked less than he leaped. This was no work for the half light of an obscured moon. Sometimes he halted for light; but delay annoyed him. A pause of ten minutes — he squatted for rest meantime — threw him into a state of incautious irritability. At this rate it would be past dawn before he made the cottages of Ragged Run Harbor.

Impatient of precaution, he presently chanced a leap. It was error. As the meager light disclosed the path a chasm of fifteen feet intervened between the edge of the upturned pan upon which he stood and a flat-topped hummock of Arctic ice to which he was bound. There was footing for the tip of his gaff midway below. He felt for this footing to entertain himself while the moon delayed. It was there. He was tempted. The chasm was critically deep for the length of the gaff. Worse than that, the hummock was higher than the pan. Doctor Rolfe peered across. It was not *much* higher. It would merely be necessary to lift stoutly at the climax of the leap. And there was need of haste — a little maid in hard case at Ragged Run and a rising cloud threatening black weather.

A slow cloud covered the moon. It was aggravating. There would be no light for a long time. A man must

take a chance —— And all at once the old man gave way to impatience; he gripped his gaff with angry determination and projected himself toward the hummock of Arctic ice. A flash later he had regretted the hazard. He perceived that he had misjudged the height of the hummock. Had the gaff been a foot longer he would have cleared the chasm. It occurred to him that he would break his back and merit the fate of his callow mistake. Then his toes caught the edge of the flat-topped hummock. His boots were of soft seal leather. He gripped the ice. And now he hung suspended and inert. The slender gaff bent under the prolonged strain of his weight and shook in response to a shiver of his arms. Courage failed a little. Doctor Rolfe was an old man. And he was tired. And he felt unequal ——

Dolly West's mother — with Dolly in her arms, resting against her soft, ample bosom — sat by the kitchen fire. It was long after dark. The wind was up; the cottage shook in the squalls. She had long ago washed Dolly's eyes and temporarily stanched the terrifying flow of blood; and now she waited, rocking gently and sometimes crooning a plaintive song of the coast to the restless child.

Tom West came in.

"Hush!"

"Is she sleepin' still?"

"Off an' on. She's in a deal o' pain. She cries out, poor lamb!" Dolly stirred and whimpered. "Any sign of un, Tom?"

"'Tis not time."

"He might ——"

"'Twill be hours afore he comes. I'm jus' wonderin' ——"

"Hush!" Dolly moaned. "Ay, Tom?"

"Terry's but a wee feller. I'm wonderin' if he ——"

The woman was confident. "He'll make it," she whispered.

"Ay; but if he's delayed ——"

"He was there afore dusk. An' the doctor got underway across the Bight ——"

"He'll not come by the Bight!"

"He'll come by the Bight. I knows that man. He'll come by the Bight — an' he'll ——"

"If he comes by the Bight he'll never get here at all. The Bight's breakin' up. There's rotten ice beyond the Spotted Horses. An' Tickle-my-Ribs is ——"

"He'll come. He'll be here afore ——"

"There's a gale o' snow comin' down. 'Twill cloud the moon. A man would lose hisself ——"

"He'll come."

Bad-Weather Tom West went out again — to plod once more down the narrows to the base of Blow-me-Down Dick and search the vague light of the coast for the first sight of Doctor Rolfe. It was not time; he knew that. There would be hours of waiting. It would be dawn before a man could come by Thank-the-Lord and Mad Harry, if he left Afternoon Arm even so early as dusk. And as for crossing the Bight — no man could cross the Bight. It was blowing up, too — clouds rising and a threat of snow abroad. Bad-weather Tom glanced apprehensively toward the northeast. It would snow before dawn. The moon was doomed. A dark night would fall. And the Bight — Doctor Rolfe would never attempt to cross the Bight ——

Hanging between the hummock and the pan, the gaff shivering under his weight, Doctor Rolfe slowly subsided toward the hummock. A toe slipped. He paused. It was a grim business. The other foot held. The leg, too, was equal to the strain. He wriggled his toe back to its grip on the edge of the ice. It was an improved foothold. He turned then and began to lift and thrust himself backward. A last thrust on the gaff set him on his haunches on the Arctic hummock, and he thanked Providence and

went on. And on — and on! There was a deal of slippery crawling to do, of slow, ticklish climbing. Doctor Rolfe rounded bergs, scaled perilous inclines, leaped crevices. / It was cold as death now. Was it ten below? The gale bit like twenty below. \

When the big northeast wind drove the ice back into Anxious Bight and heaped it inshore, the pressure had decreased as the mass of the floe diminished in the direction of the sea. The outermost areas had not felt the impact. They had not folded — had not "raftered." When the wind failed they had subsided toward the open. As they say on the coast, the ice had "gone abroad." It was distributed. And after that the sea had fallen flat; and a vicious frost had caught the floe — widespread now — and frozen it fast. It was six miles from the edge of the raftered ice to the first island of the Spotted Horses. The flat pans were solid enough, safe and easy going; but this new, connecting ice — the lanes and reaches of it ——

Doctor Rolfe's succinct characterization of the condition of Anxious Bight was also keen: "Soft as cheese!"

All that day the sun had fallen hot on the young ice in which the scattered pans of the floe were frozen. Some of the wider patches of green ice had been weakened to the breaking point. Here and there they must have been eaten clear through. Doctor Rolfe contemplated an advance with distaste. And by and by the first brief barrier of new ice confronted him. He must cross it. A black film — the color of water in that light — bridged the way from one pan to another. He would not touch it. He leaped it easily. A few fathoms forward a second space halted him. Must he put foot on it? With a running start he could —— Well, he chose not to touch the second space, but to leap it.

Soon a third interval stopped him. No man could leap it. He cast about for another way. There was none. He must run across. He scowled. Disinclination increased. He snarled: "Green ice!" He crossed then like

a cat — on tiptoe and swiftly; and he came to the other side with his heart in a flutter. "Whew!"

The ice had yielded without breaking. It had creaked, perhaps; nothing worse. It was what is called "rubber ice." There was more of it; there were miles of it. The nearer the open sea the more widespread was the floe. Beyond — hauling down the Spotted Horses, which lay in the open — the proportion of new ice would be vastly greater. At a trot for the time over the pans, which were flat, and in delicate, mincing little spurts across the bending ice, Doctor Rolfe proceeded. In a confidence that was somewhat flushed — he had rested — he went forward.

And presently, midway of a lane of green ice, he heard a gurgle as the ice bent under his weight. Water washed his boots. He had been on the lookout for holes. This hole he heard — the spurt and gurgle of it. He had not seen it. Safe across, Doctor Rolfe grinned. It was a reaction of relief. "Whew! *Whew!*" he whistled.

By and by he caught ear of the sea breaking under the wind beyond the Little Spotted Horse. He was nearing the limits of the ice. In full moonlight the whitecaps flashed news of a tumultuous open. A rumble and splash of breakers came down with the gale from the point of the island. It indicated that the sea was working in the passage between the Spotted Horses and Blow-me-Down Dick of the Ragged Run coast. The waves would run under the ice, would lift it and break it. In this way the sea would eat its way through the passage. It would destroy the young ice. It would break the pans to pieces and rub them to slush.

Doctor Rolfe must make the Little Spotted Horse and cross the passage between the island and the Ragged Run coast. Whatever the issue of haste, he must carry on and make the best of a bad job. Otherwise he would come to Tickle-my-Ribs, between the Little Spotted Horse and Blow-me-Down Dick of Ragged Run, and be marooned

from the main shore. And there was another reason: it was immediate and desperately urgent. As the sea was biting off the ice in Tickle-my-Ribs, so, too, it was encroaching upon the body of the ice in Anxious Bight. Anxious Bight was breaking up. Acres of ice were wrenched from the field at a time and then broken up by the sea. What was the direction of this swift melting? It might take any direction. And a survey of the sky troubled Doctor Rolfe. All this while the light had diminished. It was failing still. It was failing faster. There was less of the moon. By and by it would be wholly obscured.

A man would surely lose his life on the ice in thick weather — on one or other of the reaches of new ice. And thereabouts the areas of young ice were wider. To tiptoe across the yielding film of these dimly visible stretches was instantly and dreadfully dangerous. It was horrifying. A man took his life in his hand every time he left a pan. Doctor Rolfe was not insensitive. He began to sweat — not with labor but with fear. When the ice bent under him he gasped and held his breath; and he came each time to the solid refuge of a pan with his teeth set, his face contorted, his hands clenched — a shiver in the small of his back.

To achieve safety once, however, was not to win a final relief; it was merely to confront, in the same circumstances, a precisely similar peril. Doctor Rolfe was not physically exhausted; every muscle that he had was warm and alert. Yet he was weak; a repetition of suspense had unnerved him. A full hour of this, and sometimes he chattered and shook in a nervous chill. In the meantime he had approached the rocks of the Little Spotted Horse.

In the lee of the Little Spotted Horse the ice had gathered as in a back current. It was close packed alongshore to the point of the island. Between this solidly frozen press of pans and the dissolving field in Anxious Bight

there had been a lane of ruffled open water before the frost fell. It measured perhaps fifty yards. It was now black and still, sheeted with new ice which had been delayed in forming by the ripple of that exposed situation. Doctor Rolfe had encountered nothing as doubtful. He paused on the brink. A long, thin line of solid pan ice, ghostly white in the dusk beyond, was attached to the rocks of the Little Spotted Horse. It led all the way to Tickle-my-Ribs. Doctor Rolfe must make that line of solid ice. He must cross the wide lane of black, delicately frozen new ice that lay between and barred his way.

He waited for the moon. When the light broke — a thin, transient gleam — he started. A few fathoms forth the ice began to yield. A moment later he stopped short and recoiled. There was a hole — gaping wide and almost under his feet. He stopped. The water overflowed and the ice cracked. He must not stand still. To avoid a second hole he twisted violently to the right and almost plunged into a third opening. It seemed the ice was rotten from shore to shore. And it was a long way across. Doctor Rolfe danced a zigzag toward the pan ice under the cliffs, spurting forward and retreating and swerving. He did not pause; had he paused he would have dropped through. When he was within two fathoms of the pan ice a foot broke through and tripped him flat on his face. With his weight thus distributed he was momentarily held up. Water squirted and gurgled out of the break — an inch of water, forming a pool. Doctor Rolfe lay still and expectant in this pool.

Dolly West's mother still sat by the kitchen fire. It was long past midnight now.

Once more Bad-Weather Tom tiptoed in from the frosty night. "Is she sleepin' still?" he whispered.

"Hush! She've jus' toppled off again. She's havin' a deal o' pain, Tom. An' she've been bleedin' again."

"Put her down on the bed, dear."

The woman shook her head. "I'm afeared 'twould start the wounds, Tom. Any sign of un yet, Tom?"

"Not yet."

"He'll come soon."

"No; 'tis not near time. 'Twill be dawn afore he ——"

"Soon, Tom."

"He'll be delayed by snow. The moon's near gone. 'Twill be black dark in half an hour. I felt a flake o' snow as I come in. An' he'll maybe wait at Mad Harry ——"

"He's comin' by the Bight, Tom."

Dolly stirred, cried out, awakened with a start, and lifted her bandaged head a little. She did not open her eyes. "Is that you, doctor, sir?"

"Hush!" the mother whispered. "'Tis not the doctor yet."

"When ——"

"He's comin'."

"I'll take a look," said Tom. He went out again and stumbled down the path to Blow-me-Down Dick by Tickle-my-Ribs.

Doctor Rolfe lay still and expectant in the pool of water near the pan ice and rocks of the Little Spotted Horse. He waited. Nothing happened. Presently he ventured delicately to take off a mitten, to extend his hand, to sink his fingernails in the ice and try to draw himself forward. It was a failure. His fingernails were too short. He could merely scratch the ice. He reflected that if he did not concentrate his weight — that if he kept it distributed — he would not break through. And once more he tried to make use of his fingernails. It turned out that the nails of the other hand were longer. Doctor Rolfe managed to gain half an inch before they slipped. They slipped again — and again and again. It was hopeless. Doctor Rolfe lay still, pondering.

Presently he shot his gaff toward the pan ice, to be rid of the incumbrance of it, and lifted himself on his palms

and toes. By this the distribution of his weight was not greatly disturbed. It was not concentrated upon one point. It was divided by four and laid upon four points. And there were no fearsome consequences. It was a hopeful experiment.

Doctor Rolfe stepped by inches on his hands toward the pan ice — dragging his toes. In this way he came to the line of solid ice under the cliffs of the Little Spotted Horse and had a clear path forward. Whereupon he picked up his gaff, and set out for the point of the Little Spotted Horse and the passage of Tickle-my-Ribs. He was heartened.

Tickle-my-Ribs was heaving. The sea had by this time eaten its way clear through the passage from the open to the first reaches of Anxious Bight and far and wide beyond. The channel was half a mile long; in width a quarter of a mile at the narrowest. Doctor Rolfe's path was determined. It must lead from the point of the island to the base of Blow-me-Down Dick and the adjoining fixed and solid ice of the narrows to Ragged Run Harbor. Ice choked the channel. It was continuously running in from the open. It was a thin sheet of fragments. There was only an occasional considerable pan. A high sea ran outside. Waves from the open slipped under this field of little pieces and lifted it in running swells. No single block of ice was at rest.

Precisely as a country doctor might petulantly regard a stretch of hub-deep crossroad, Doctor Rolfe, the outport physician, complained of the passage of Tickle-my-Ribs. Not many of the little pans would bear his weight. They would sustain it momentarily. Then they would tip or sink. There would be foothold through the instant required to choose another foothold and leap toward it. Always the leap would have to be taken from sinking ground. When he came, by good chance, to a pan that would bear him up for a moment, Doctor Rolfe would

have instantly to discover another heavy block to which to shape his agitated course. There would be no rest, no certainty beyond the impending moment. But, leaping thus, alert and agile and daring, a man might ——

Might? Mm-m, a man might! And he might not! There were contingencies: A man might leap short and find black water where he had depended upon a footing of ice; a man might land on the edge of a pan and fall slowly back for sheer lack of power to obtain a balance; a man might misjudge the strength of a pan to bear him up; a man might find no ice near enough for the next immediately imperative leap; a man might be unable either to go forward or retreat. And there was the light to consider. A man might be caught in the dark. He would be in hopeless case if caught in the dark.

Light was imperative. Doctor Rolfe glanced aloft. "Whew!" he whistled.

The moon and the ominous bank of black cloud were very close. There was snow in the air. A thickening flurry ran past.

Bad-Weather Tom West was not on the lookout when Doctor Rolfe opened the kitchen door at Ragged Run Harbor and strode in with the air of a man who had survived difficulties and was proud of it. Bad-weather Tom West was sitting by the fire, his face in his hands; and the mother of Dolly West — with Dolly still restlessly asleep in her arms — was rocking, rocking, as before.

And Doctor Rolfe set to work — in a way so gentle, with a voice so persuasive, with a hand so tender and sure, with a skill and wisdom so keen, that little Dolly West, who was brave enough in any case, as you know, yielded the additional patience and courage which the simple means at hand for her relief required; and Doctor Rolfe laved Dolly West's blue eyes until she could see again, and sewed up her wounds that night so that no scar remained; and in the broad light of the next day picked out

grains of powder until not a single grain was left to disfigure the child.

Three months after that it again occurred to Doctor Rolfe, of Afternoon Arm, that the practice of medicine was amply provided with hardship and shockingly empty of pecuniary reward. Since the night of the passage of Anxious Bight he had not found time to send out any statements of accounts. It occurred to him that he had then determined, after a reasonable and sufficient consideration of the whole matter, to "tilt the fee." Very well; he would "tilt the fee." He would provide for himself an old age of reasonable ease and self-respecting independence.

Thereupon Doctor Rolfe prepared a statement of account for Bad-Weather West, of Ragged Run Harbor, and after he had written the amount of the bill — "$4" — he thoughtfully crossed it out and wrote "$1.75."

NORMAN DUNCAN

The life of Norman Duncan was one of romance and adventure. Born in Western Ontario in 1871 and educated in Toronto University, he came in early manhood to the United States and engaged in newspaper work in New York. His first important literary contribution was *The Soul of the Street*, a series of short stories of life in the Syrian quarter of New York. Soon after this, Mr. Duncan was sent by *McClure's Magazine* to Newfoundland where he spent three summers, learning the people of that rugged country and gathering real experience upon which to base his Labrador stories. Later travels took him to Palestine, Arabia, Egypt, and Australia, but no country so won his sympathy and understanding as did Labrador. He died in New York in 1916 while at the height of his power.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What is Dr. Rolfe's mood when you first see him? What do you learn about his life? Do you blame him when he says, "I'll tilt the fee"? Tell the story of the accident to

Dolly West. When Dr. Rolfe hears of it from Terry, what is his immediate response? Imagine, or if possible draw, a picture of the doctor as he sets out.

2. Tell the story of his long struggle with the ice, of his tender care of Dolly West, of how he finally "tilts the fee." For another splendid account of a journey over the ice-floes, read *Madman's Luck*, also by Norman Duncan.
3. This is a story of local color as well as of character. Why is Norman Duncan able to describe the Labrador country and climate so realistically? Note the odd geographical names — Anxious Bight, Ragged Run Harbor, Tumble Tickle; also the odd nicknames such as Bad-Weather Tom West. Do such names suggest that sea and weather are all-important to these people? Show how the element of conflict enters into both plot and setting of this story.
4. Boys and girls everywhere like stories of simple heroism. After reading this story get acquainted with the life of Dr. Grenfell, Norman Duncan's friend, and read his splendid tale *Adrift on an Ice-Pan*. Dr. Grenfell is probably the original of Dr. Rolfe. The story of his work in Labrador is as romantic as fiction.
5. For another story of heroism in homely guise read *Turkey Red* by Frances Gilchrist Wood. (In O. Henry Prize Collection, 1919.) Compare the strenuous life of Dr. Rolfe with that of the pioneers whose symbol is "turkey red." Note how different the two stories are and yet how they agree in emphasizing the virtues of unassuming courage and self-sacrifice.

Volumes of stories by Norman Duncan:
The Way of the Sea
Doctor Luke of the Labrador
Harbor Tales Down North

SHEENER

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS[1]

I

When he was sober the man always insisted that his name was Evans, but in his cups he was accustomed to declare, in a boastful fashion, that his name was not Evans at all. However, he never went further than this, and since none of us were particularly interested, we were satisfied to call him Evans, or, more often, Bum, for short. He was the second assistant janitor; and whereas, in some establishments, a janitor is a man of power and place, it is not so in a newspaper office. In such institutions, where great men are spoken of irreverently and by their first names, a janitor is a man of no importance. How much less, then, his second assistant. It was never a part of Evans's work, for example, to sweep the floors. There is something lordly in the gesture of the broom. But the janitor's first assistant attended to that; and Evans's regular duties were more humble, not unconnected with such things as cuspidors. There was no man so poor as to do him honor; yet he had always a certain loftiness of bearing. He was tall, rather above the average height, with a long, thin, bony face like a horse, and an aristocratic stoop about his neck and shoulders. His hands were slender; he walked in a fashion that you might have called a shuffle, but which might also have been characterized as a walk of indolent assurance. His eyes were wash-blue, and his straggling mustache drooped at the corners.

Sober, he was a silent man, but when he had drunk he was apt to become mysteriously loquacious. And he

[1] From "Thrifty Stock" by Ben Ames Williams. Copyright by E. P. Dutton & Co.

drank whenever the state of his credit permitted. At such times he spoke of his antecedents in a lordly and condescending fashion which we found amusing. "You call me Evans," he would say. "That does well enough to be sure. Quite so, and all that. Evans! Hah!"

And then he would laugh, in a barking fashion that with his long, bony countenance always suggested to me a coughing horse. But when he was pressed for details, the man — though he might be weaving and blinking with liquor — put a seal upon his lips. He said there were certain families in one of the Midland Counties of England who would welcome him home if he chose to go; but he never named them, and he never chose to go, and we put him down for a liar by the book. All of us except Sheener.

II

Sheener was a Jewish newsboy; that is to say, a representative of the only thoroughbred people in the world. I have known Sheener for a good many years, and he is worth knowing; also, the true tale of his life might have inspired Scheherazade. A book must be made of Sheener some day. For the present, it is enough to say that he had the enterprise which adversity has taught his people; he had the humility which they have learned by enduring insults they were powerless to resent, and he had the courage and the heart which were his ancient heritage. And — the man Evans had captured and enslaved his imagination.

He believed in Evans from the beginning. This may have been through a native credulity which failed to manifest itself in his other dealings with the world. I think it more probable that Evans and his pretensions appealed to the love of romance native to Sheener. I think he enjoyed believing, as we enjoy lending ourselves to the illusion of the theater. Whatever the explanation, a certain alliance developed between the two; a something like friendship. I was one of those who laughed at

Sheener's credulity, but he told me, in his energetic fashion, that I was making a mistake.

"You got that guy wrong," he would say. "He ain't always been a bum. A guy with half an eye can see that. The way he talks, and the way he walks, and all. There's class to him, I'm telling you. Class, bo."

"He walks like a splay-footed walrus, and he talks like a drunken old hound," I told Sheener. "He's got you buffaloed, that's all."

"Pull in your horns; you're coming to a bridge," Sheener warned me. "Don't be a goat all your life. He's a gent; that's what this guy is."

"Then I'm glad I'm a roughneck," I retorted; and Sheener shook his head.

"That's all right," he exclaimed. "That's all right. He ain't had it easy, you know. Scrubbing spittoons is enough to take the polish off any guy. I'm telling you he's there. Forty ways. You'll see, bo. You'll see."

"I'm waiting," I said.

"Keep right on," Sheener advised me. "Keep right on. The old stuff is there. It'll show. Take it from me."

I laughed at him. "If I get you," I said, "you're looking for something along the line of 'Noblesse Oblige.' What?"

"Cut the comedy," he retorted. "I'm telling you, the old class is there. You can't keep a fast horse in a poor man's stable."

"Blood will tell, eh?"

"Take it from me," said Sheener.

It will be perceived that Evans had in Sheener not only a disciple; he had an advocate and a defender. And Sheener in these rôles was not to be despised. I have said he was a newsboy; to put it more accurately, he was in his early twenties, with forty years of experience behind him, and with half the newsboys of the city obeying his commands and worshiping him like a minor god. He had full charge of our city circulation and was quite as important,

and twice as valuable to the paper, as any news editor could hope to be. In making a friend of him, Evans had found an ally in the high places; and it became speedily apparent that Sheener proposed to be more than a mere friend in name. For instance, I learned one day that he was drawing Evans's wages for him, and had appointed himself in some sort a steward for the other.

"That guy wouldn't ever save a cent," he told me when I questioned him. "I give him enough to get soused on, and I stick five dollars in the bank for him every week. I made him buy a new suit of clothes with it last week. Say, you wouldn't know him if you run into him in his glad rags."

"How does he like your running his affairs?" I asked.

"Like it?" Sheener echoed. "He don't have to like it. It he tries to pull anything on me, I'll poke the old coot in the eye."

I doubt whether this was actually his method of dominating Evans. It is more likely that he used a diplomacy which occasionally appeared in his dealings with the world. Certainly the arrangement presently collapsed, for Sheener confessed to me that he had given his savings back to Evans. We were minus a second assistant janitor for a week as a consequence, and when Evans tottered back to the office and would have gone to work I told him he was through.

He took it meekly enough, but not Sheener. Sheener came to me with fire in his eye.

"Sa-a-ay," he demanded, "what's coming off here, anyhow? What do you think you're trying to pull?"

I asked him what he was talking about, and he said: "Evans says you've given him the hook."

"That's right," I admitted. "He's through."

"He is not," Sheener told me flatly. "You can't fire that guy."

"Why not?"

"He's got to live, ain't he?"

I answered, somewhat glibly, that I did not see the necessity, but the look that sprang at once into Sheener's eye made me faintly ashamed of myself, and I went on to urge that Evans was failing to do his work and could deserve no consideration.

"That's all right," Sheener told me. "I didn't hear any kicks that his work wasn't done while he was on this bat."

"Oh, I guess it got done all right. Some one had to do it. We can't pay him for work that some one else does."

"Say, don't try to pull that stuff," Sheener protested. "As long as his work is done, you ain't got any kick. This guy has got to have a job, or he'll go bust, quick. It's all that keeps his feet on the ground. If he didn't think he was earning his living, he'd go on the bum in a minute."

I was somewhat impatient with Sheener's insistence, but I was also interested in this developing situation. "Who's going to do his work, anyhow?" I demanded.

For the first time in our acquaintance I saw Sheener look confused. "That's all right, too," he told me. "It don't take any skin off of your back, long as it's done."

In the end I surrendered. Evans kept his job; and Sheener — I once caught him in the act, to his vast embarrassment — did the janitor's work when Evans was unfit for duty. Also Sheener loaned him money, small sums that mounted into an interesting total; and furthermore I know that on one occasion Sheener fought for him.

The man Evans went his pompous way, accepting Sheener's homage and protection as a matter of right, and in the course of half a dozen years I left the paper for other work, saw Sheener seldom, and Evans not at all.

III

About ten o'clock one night in early summer I was wandering somewhat aimlessly through the South End to see what I might see when I encountered Sheener. He was running, and his dark face was twisted with anxiety.

When he saw me he stopped with an exclamation of relief, and I asked him what the matter was.

"You remember old Bum Evans?" he asked, and added: "He's sick. I'm looking for a doctor. The old guy is just about all in."

"You mean to say you're still looking out for that old tramp?" I demanded.

"Sure, I am," he said hotly; "that old boy is there. He's got the stuff. Him and me are pals." He was hurrying me along the street toward the office of the doctor he sought. I asked where Evans was. "In my room," he told me. "I found him on the street. Last night. He was crazy. The D.T.'s. I ain't been able to get away from him till now. He's asleep. Wait. Here's where the doc hangs out."

Five minutes later the doctor and Sheener and I were retracing our steps toward Sheener's lodging, and presently we crowded into the small room where Evans lay on Sheener's bed. The man's muddy garments were on the floor; he himself tossed and twisted feverishly under Sheener's blankets. Sheener and the doctor bent over him, while I stood by. Evans waked, under the touch of their hands, and waked to sanity. He was cold sober and desperately sick.

When the doctor had done what could be done and gone on his way, Sheener sat down on the edge of the bed and rubbed the old man's head with a tenderness of which I could not have believed the newsboy capable. Evans's eyes were open; he watched the other, and at last he said huskily:

"I say, you know, I'm a bit knocked up."

Sheener reassured him. "That's all right, bo," he said. "You hit the hay. Sleep's the dose for you. I ain't going away."

Evans moved his head on the pillow, as though he were nodding. "A bit tight, wasn't it, what?" he asked.

"Say," Sheener agreed. "You said something, Bum. I thought you'd kick off, sure."

The old man considered for a little, his lips twitching and shaking. "I say, you know," he murmured at last. "Can't have that. Potter's Field, and all that sort of business. Won't do. Sheener, when I do take the jump, you write home for me. Pass the good word. You'll hear from them."

Sheener said: "Sure I will. Who'll I write to, Bum?"

Evans, I think, was unconscious of my presence. He gave Sheener a name; his name. Also, he told him the name of the family lawyer, in one of the Midland cities of England, and added certain instructions . . .

When he had drifted into uneasy sleep Sheener came out into the hall to see me off. I asked him what he meant to do.

"What am I going to do?" he repeated. "I'm going to write to this guy's lawyer. Let them send for him. This ain't no place for him."

"You'll have your trouble for your pains," I told him. "That old soak is plain liar; that's all."

Sheener laughed at me. "That's all right, bo," he told me. "I know. This guy's the real cheese. You'll see."

I asked him to let me know if he heard anything, and he said he would. But within a day or two I forgot the matter, and would hardly have remembered it if Sheener had not telephoned me a month later.

"Say, you're a wise guy, ain't you?" he derided when I answered the phone. I admitted it. "I got a letter from that lawyer in England," he told me. "This Evans is the stuff, just like I said. His wife run away with another man, and he went to the devil fifteen years ago. They've been looking for him ever since his son grew up."

"Son?" I asked.

"Son. Sure! Raising wheat out in Canada somewhere. They give me his address. He's made a pile. I'm going to write to him."

"What does Bum say?"

"Him? I ain't told him. I won't till I'm sure the kid's

coming after him." He said again that I was a wise guy; and I apologized for my wisdom and asked for a share in what was to come. He promised to keep me posted.

IV

Ten days later he telephoned me while I was at supper to ask if I could come to his room. I said: "What's up?"

"The old guy's boy is coming after him," Sheener said. "He's got the shakes, waiting. I want you to come and help me take care of him."

"When's the boy coming?"

"Gets in at midnight to-night," said Sheener.

I promised to make haste; and half an hour later I joined him in Sheener's room. Sheener let me in. Evans himself sat in something like a stupor, on a chair by the bed. He was dressed in a cheap suit of ready-made clothes, to which he lent a certain dignity. His cheeks were shaved clean, his mustache was trimmed, his thin hair was plastered down on his bony skull. The man stared straight before him, trembling and quivering. He did not look toward me when I came in; and Sheener and I sat down by the table and talked together in undertones.

"The boy's really coming?" I asked.

Sheener said proudly: "I'm telling you."

"You heard from him?"

"Got a wire the day he got my letter."

"You've told Bum?"

"I told him right away. I had to do it. The old boy was sober by then, and crazy for a shot of booze. That was Monday. He wanted to go out and get pied; but when I told him about his boy, he begun to cry. And he ain't touched a drop since then."

"You haven't let him?"

"Sure I'd let him. But he wouldn't. I always told you the class was there. He says to me: 'I can't let my boy see me in this state, you know. Have to straighten up a bit. I'll need new clothes.'"

"I noticed his new suit."

"Sure," Sheener agreed. "I bought it for him."

"Out of his savings?"

"He ain't been saving much lately."

"Sheener," I asked, "how much does he owe you? For money loaned and spent for him."

Sheener said hotly: "He don't owe me a cent."

"I know. But how much have you spent on him?"

"If I hadn't have give it to him, I'd have blowed it somehow. He needed it."

I guessed at a hundred dollars, at two hundred. Sheener would not tell me. "I'm telling you, he's my pal," he said. "I'm not looking for anything out of this."

"If this millionaire son of his has any decency, he'll make it up to you."

"He don't know a thing about me," said Sheener, "except my name. I've just wrote as though I knowed the old guy, here in the house, see. Said he was sick, and all."

"And the boy gets in to-night?"

"Midnight," said Sheener, and Evans, from his chair, echoed: "Midnight!" Then asked with a certain stiff anxiety: "Do I look all right, Sheener? Look all right to see my boy?"

"Say," Sheener told him. "You look like the Prince of Wales." He went across to where the other sat and gripped him by the shoulder. "You look like the king o' the world."

Old Evans brushed at his coat anxiously; his fingers picked and twisted; and Sheener sat down on the bed beside him and began to soothe and comfort the man as though he were a child.

V

The son was to arrive by way of Montreal, and at eleven o'clock we left Sheener's room for the station. There was a flower stand on the corner, and Sheener

bought a red carnation and fixed it in the old man's buttonhole. "That's the way the boy'll know him," he told me. "They ain't seen each other for — since the boy was a kid."

Evans accepted the attention querulously; he was trembling and feeble, yet held his head high. We took the subway, reached the station, sat down for a space in the waiting room.

But Evans was impatient; he wanted to be out in the train shed, and we went out there and walked up and down before the gate. I noticed that he was studying Sheener with some embarrassment in his eyes. Sheener was, of course, an unprepossessing figure. Lean, swarthy, somewhat flashy of dress, he looked what he was. He was my friend, of course, and I was able to look beneath the exterior. But it seemed to me that sight of him distressed Evans.

In the end the old man said, somewhat furtively: "I say, you know, I want to meet my boy alone. You won't mind standing back a bit when the train comes in."

"Sure," Sheener told him. "We won't get in the way. You'll see. He'll pick you out in a minute, old man. Leave it to me."

Evans nodded. "Quite so," he said with some relief. "Quite so, to be sure."

So we waited. Waited till the train slid in at the end of the long train shed. Sheener gripped the old man's arm. "There he comes," he said sharply. "Take a brace, now. Stand right there, where he'll spot you when he comes out. Right there, bo."

"You'll step back a bit, eh, what?" Evans asked.

"Don't worry about us," Sheener told him. "Just you keep your eye skinned for the boy. Good luck, bo."

We left him standing there, a tall, gaunt, shaky figure. Sheener and I drew back toward the stairs that lead to the elevated structure, and watched from that vantage point. The train stopped, and the passengers came into the sta-

tion, at first in a trickle and then in a stream, with porters hurrying before them, baggage laden.

The son was one of the first. He emerged from the gate, a tall chap, not unlike his father. Stopped for a moment, casting his eyes about, and saw the flower in the old man's lapel. Leaped toward him hungrily.

They gripped hands, and we saw the son drop his hand on the father's shoulder. They stood there, hands still clasped, while the young man's porter waited in the background. We could hear the son's eager questions, hear the older man's drawled replies. Saw them turn at last, and heard the young man say: "Taxi!" The porter caught up the bag. The taxi stand was at our left, and they came almost directly toward us.

As they approached, Sheener stepped forward, a cheap, somewhat disreputable, figure. His hand was extended toward the younger man. The son saw him, looked at him in some surprise, looked toward his father inquiringly.

Evans saw Sheener too, and a red flush crept up his gaunt cheeks. He did not pause, did not take Sheener's extended hand; instead he looked the newsboy through and through.

Sheener fell back to my side. They stalked past us, out to the taxi stand.

I moved forward. I would have halted them, but Sheener caught my arm. I said hotly: "But see here. He can't throw you like that."

Sheener brushed his sleeve across his eyes. "Hell," he said huskily. "A gent like him can't let on that he knows a guy like me."

I looked at Sheener, and I forgot old Evans and his son. I looked at Sheener, and I caught his elbow and we turned away.

He had been quite right, of course, all the time. Blood will always tell. You can't keep a fast horse in a poor man's stable. And a man is always a man, in any guise.

If you still doubt, do as I did. Consider Sheener.

BEN AMES WILLIAMS

Ben Ames Williams was born at Macon, Mississippi, in 1889. After graduation from Dartmouth College in 1910, he began his career as a newspaper writer, and since 1916 has been devoting himself entirely to the writing of fiction. The volumes of stories which he has already published and his constant contributions to current magazines have given him a secure position among contemporary American writers. These sentences from a letter to the editor in regard to the reprinting of *Sheener* may explain one secret of Mr. Williams's popularity with the young: "You may be sure that I am always glad when anything I have written is brought to the attention of young people. My own boys, who are not yet at high-school age, nevertheless seem to find pleasure in reading my stories." Mr. Williams lives at Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Which element is emphasized in this story — setting, plot, or characterization?
2. What difference would it make in the story if the setting were changed to a large factory? Compare *Sheener* and *Prelude* as to the setting. In which is setting more vital to the plot? Explain why. Read what the Introduction has to say about *Setting*.
3. Do you, like Sheener, believe in Evans from the beginning? Do you think that Evans's act at the end is the logical outcome of his character? Would you prefer that Mr. Williams had made the story end more happily?
4. What double meaning is there in the author's words near the end, "and a man is always a man, in any guise"? Robert Burns says:

> "The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
> The man's the gowd for a' that."

5. Read *The Substitute*, by François Coppée. Are you satisfied with the conclusion of that story? Is the sacrifice of *The Substitute* worth while? Is Sheener's sacrifice worth while?
6. What did the other men at the office think of Sheener's devotion to Evans? Imagine a conversation between two

of them, in which one holds that such one-sided friendship is foolish, the other that sincere devotion is its own reward. Write this as a theme.

Character stories worth study:

The Derelict — Richard Harding Davis
They Grind Exceeding Small — Ben Ames Williams
The Substitute — François Coppée
The Heyday of the Blood — Dorothy Canfield
The Gay Old Dog — Edna Ferber
Tennessee's Partner — Bret Harte
Quite So — Thomas Bailey Aldrich

THE DONKEYMAN'S CHRISTMAS

By ARTHUR MASON

The crew on the windlass labored with panting breath.

"Fifteen fathoms in the hawsepipe; heave, men, heave!" encouraged the mate.

Aft, and towering over the captain, stood the red-headed donkeyman, new aboard the four-masted schooner Mary Kent.

"It's me repitation ye'd roon," he shouted; "yez tould me what a foine donkey yez had; wit the shteam spluttering through her auld sieve of a boiler! Shure 'n the eccenthric head's cracked, the friction gear's gone, the injector's corroded. It's a danger she is to the ship and the min!"

The captain stood nervously smoking the butt end of a cigar. He held it impaled on a toothpick, so short it was.

"You're a mechanic," he said sarcastically.

"I am that," retorted the donkeyman; "me father before me was as foine a wan as iver lipped a rivet. Me name is Dinnis Fay, I'd have ye undershtand — Dinnis Fay."

"You're a beach-comber," shouted the captain. "I'm paying you five dollars more than the crew, for what? You don't seem to know enough about the donkey to heave up the anchor."

"You're a liar," yelled Fay; "annything that'll hiss or whistle I can run; you're ——"

"The anchor is up and down, sir," called the mate from the forecastle head.

"Get sail on her," answered the captain. "You go ahead and repair the donkey," he said, turning to the donkeyman.

"I will not, surr, and that's flat. You're paying me to

dhrive her, not to make a new wan out of her. Put me ashore or I'll have the law on yez," he threatened.

The captain's bony body seemed to contract in meditation. Donkeymen would not stay on the Mary Kent. Being master and owner, the thought of paying for repairs on the donkey engine gave him all the pains of greed and stinginess.

"Fay," said he, finally, "fix her up, and if she runs to my satisfaction by the first time we need to use her, I'll give you twenty dollars bonus. There now," he concluded grandly, "where's the master who would do that for you? Think of it! Twenty dollars over your wages."

The donkeyman went forward, muttering, but purposeful.

A man was sent aft to the wheel, the foresail and mainsail were set, and a dark-skinned pilot was aboard. The Mary Kent was under way through the narrow channel that leads from Suva Harbor to the open sea.

"Good-bye," said the pilot, as he climbed over the side. "Pleasant voyage and a Merry Christmas!"

"What?" said the captain.

"Merry Christmas, captain."

"Hum," grunted the captain, "Christmas is fifteen days away."

The last thing he wanted was to be reminded of that day. It costs money to feed sailors; ship dividends were not earned to spend on suet and raisins, plum duff and canned turkey.

"Give her the topsails, Mr. Blossom," he said irritably.

The wind being fresh and the sea smooth, the schooner raced away to the north'ard and west'ard of the Fiji group.

"Put the log over, Mr. Blossom, put the log over; we must see what she is doing."

As he watched the miles register, a miserly twitch came into the captain's eyes.

"I ought to do well by her this voyage, eh, Mr. Blossom?"

"You ought to," answered the mate dryly.

The crew were busy on deck, sweeping and coiling down ropes. They shot baleful glances at the donkey-room, where now it sounded as if Fay were trying to break the donkey engine to pieces.

Eight bells rang. The cook's head, with a feathery fringe of hair around it, shot out of the galley door to the limit of his short neck.

"Come and get it!" he shouted.

Two of the crew were late of the Nellie Swan. No longer slick and fat as when they sailed on that liberal craft, they now lazed along with the rest of the crew to the forecastle.

Gus brought the dinner, unappetizing enough with its pickled meat and its coffee made from wheat burned black in the galley stove. Good enough, the captain thought, for inferior intellects.

Pete looked at it. "Salt horse leaving port," he groaned; "I'd like to roast his hidebound soul! We may save money on her all right, but give me the ship where a man can get his grub and his game."

In the cabin, eating dinner with the mate, the captain voiced his opinion otherwise.

"Give me the ship," he said, "where a man can save a little money as he goes along. Look at the crew now, eating me out of my profits, and getting thirty dollars a month for abusing me into the bargain. Keep your eye on the donkeyman, Mr. Blossom; I want a good job done. I'm paying well for it."

"He has her all in pieces," answered the mate regretfully.

The captain rubbed his thin hands. "Of course, if she'll run, even if it isn't a first-class job, I'll be in pocket, eh?"

Fourteen days out from Suva the Mary Kent was six degrees north of the Equator. It was Christmas Eve,

and all sorts of Christmas activities were going on in the forecastle. One man was shaving, another mending a white shirt. The rattle of clamshells betrayed the fact that Pete and Gus were celebrating with a little game, using empty clamshells for antes.

"What do you think there'll be for dinner to-morrow?" asked Pete.

"Plum duff for sure, matie. I saw the cook getting ready to get her together. Turkey too, maybe. The Old Man'll not deny us one good feed." And the clamshells rattled merrily on.

Christmas spirit was pervading even the donkey-room, and Dennis Fay's lips were pursed in a holiday whistle as he put the finishing touches to the donkey. The packing and daviting were done, the cylinder-head had a strap bolted around it. As he wrenched the nuts tight, he stopped whistling to have a word with the donkey.

"Ye'll run now, me lady. It's bonus bucks ye'll be fetching me, twinty av thim. A purty Christmas, and me the only wan to share it wit. Ah, now, a coat av black paint on your blisters would desave the eye of anny man. I'll just be going aft, now, to tell the Auld Man that I'm goin' to put shteam in your boiler. It's the poor Christmas he'll be havin' wit his twinty gone, the auld shkin-flint!"

But when the donkeyman reached the deck, the sniff of sullen elements met him, and he saw that long swells from the northeast were rolling.

"I'll wait awhile," he said, "and see what happens."

The captain and the mate were nervously pacing the poop, keeping their eye on a falling barometer and a sun setting in a smoked-glass sky. The second mate was battening down the hatches. The cook pulled storm shutters over the galley windows, and the watch below laid aside their Christmas cheerfulness and came on deck to pad around barefoot with the others, shortening sail. Haloed stars shone here and there through scuddy sky-shadows.

"Strip her down to the poles," shouted the captain; and his voice seemed to fill the deck. The crew worked for dear life. Two bells rang out — nine o'clock.

Out of the east came a sound like roaring river waters. The sailors, with frightened looks, braced themselves to stem the storm; the shriveled captain had barely time to clutch the rail, when the hurricane swept in on them. The rigging howled with squeezing rage, seas came with centripetal swiftness, sending water over the decks in muslin-like sheets, and the Mary Kent, skeleton-helpless before it all, spun around and buried her head into the bight of the gale.

One by one the sailors secured themselves in the lee of the weather-bulwarks. The captain on the poop took a turn of the spanker sheet around him, fastening it to the rail. His storm cap had blown away, his hair tugged at the scalp, his clothes ballooned and made him look twice his size. If his thoughts had found echo, they would have come back slavering of money.

"If only I had more insurance on her! Give me the chance again and I'll make it as heavy as the wind that blows to-night."

There were no bells struck on the schooner, and it was long after twelve that night when he crawled on his hands and knees to the cabin, followed by the mate. A sea with a rock-surf roar tumbled over the decks, flooding the Mary Kent fore and aft. Water, with the lapping jaws of a monster, gushed down the companionway into the cabin. The two men clung to the table, their legs floating helplessly, while the poor struggling schooner dove down, down. Was she never coming back? The salt sea in the cabin, like a wild, sucking thing, pitched its force against a bulkhead, bursting open the main-deck door, and releasing its captive viciousness after jamming all things movable in the door.

Up, up, came the Mary Kent, to make another fight for her life.

"Don't stand there thinking of yourself!" shouted the captain. "My ship is foundering — she's all I have!"

The mate's eyes glistened with a something that brave men show in the face of danger.

"Captain," he said calmly, "to-day is Christmas Day. I am praying that we shall all live to see it through."

Almost screaming with rage and fright, the captain ordered him out, bidding him reef the main jib, put a tarpaulin in the main rigging, anything, to keep her steady.

Out on the deck the crew, like drenched hens, lay cooped in shelter. The mate stirred them with wild gestures, and their cackling oaths were lost in wind and wave. Sail would not stay on the Mary Kent, and daylight found her still under bare poles. The galley was awash, and the crew made their Christmas breakfast on hard-tack flavored with brine, and found the heart, in their rugged simplicity, to mourn for what they might have had.

So the day passed, cheerless, dangerous, without even so much as a cup of black coffee to put heart into a man. Cross-seas washed the life boats away, and the flying jib-boom went in one plunge that swallowed the Mary Kent to the breast of her. And yet she came back, always back. In those moments of calm when she rested in the hollows of the Pacific, sheltered by moving, massive walls of green water, the hearts of the men would choose to call it all a dream; and when she would rise to flutter on the crests, like a winged creature helpless to soar, their courage would sink into the lonely wastes of a mad ocean.

The morning of the twenty-sixth brought the sun again. The wind had withered away to gentleness, and the toothless waves rolled in sluggish, harmless heaps. The crew stretched themselves and yawned loudly. Smoke came from the galley stove. The captain walked around the decks with no regard for the sailors or the God who had saved him. He was figuring his losses angrily. As he passed the galley door the cook spoke:

"Captain, shall we have Christmas to-day? The men are badly done up."

The captain turned on him savagely.

"Christmas," he snapped, "was yesterday. It's gone, and there'll be none this year aboard the Mary Kent. Do you hear that?"

The galley and the donkey-room were housed together, separated by a thin wooden partition. The donkeyman heard the captain, and promptly stuck his head out of his door to answer him.

"Ha," said he, "so it's the Holy Day ye would be taking away from us, like the hurricane washed your boats away. Ye auld widow-robber! Nor is it anny wonder the luck ye be havin'."

"What's Christmas," retorted the captain, "to a bare-footed beach-comber like you? If I hadn't shipped you, you would be starving now."

He turned and hurried aft.

Fay's bare toenails scraped on the deck. He rolled up his sleeves.

"Let me get one shwipe at ye," he shouted, "and your bonus and wages can ——"

The master mounted the poop and hog-grunted to the binnacle. Fay, with leashed emotion, backed into the donkey-room.

The crew, tired and sore, were summoned to the work of turning a spare spar into a new jib-boom, that the owner of the Mary Kent might not lose more money through delay in making sail. They groaned a good deal; but the most abused of sailors is interested in his work, and it was with some satisfaction that, as noon approached, they saw the new boom whittled and ready to fit. The task lay in getting it out where it belonged — a dangerous and heavy job on an unsteady ship — and they had a great deal of advice to give as to how it should be done.

"Put plenty of guy-ropes on it," said Pete; "if ever it gets away from us, it will be worse than the storm."

"What's the donkey for, anyway?" said Gus. "Let her do the work. Let the donkeyman show us what's the good of all the noise he's been making. That's all."

While they argued, the mate and the captain stood on the poop shooting the sun. The captain looked at the mate suspiciously. He had never seen him so careful — he seemed completely absorbed in the figures he was transferring from the arc of the sextant to a little dirty piece of paper. He noted that his gait was springy as he dove below to juggle with the numbers.

Then the cook brought dinner into the cabin, and they faced each other across the table.

"Well," said the mate, showing humorous wrinkles around his eyes, "it isn't as bad as I thought it would be. We are only twenty miles east of the hundred and eightieth meridian."

"That's a long way without sail," munched the captain.

"It is," answered the mate, with spirit; "she'll never drift across it in time. The whole thing is a question of getting sail on her in a hurry, after the boom goes out. It's a good thing that the donkey's in order."

At any other time the mate's enthusiasm would have found answer in the captain's miser-leather heart. Now it struck him chill. He knew what the mate was referring to. If the Mary Kent crossed 180 degrees before twelve that night, she would lose a day, and that day would be December twenty-sixth, and they would once more have Christmas Day.

"Nothing tastes good to me," he said; and he went up on deck, leaving the mate happily interested in his dinner. The crew were eating in the forecastle, exchanging pleasantries with the cook. No one noticed that the captain stole forward to the donkey-room. No one saw him pause and regard the donkey malevolently, his eye passing over the davitings, neatly cut and scraped, the sandpapered bearings, and the fine coat of black paint. No one heard him mutter to himself:

"Five hundred dollars for repairs. Loss of time. Water in the hold. Then twenty dollars, to pay a man to be insulted on his own ship, and high-priced food and an idle day for a worthless crew. It's more than flesh and blood can stand."

Whining and sweating as he worked, crawly as is the thief who robs himself, he seized a wrench, and, unscrewing the blow-off valve, put it into his pocket and left the donkey-room unseen. His courage returned as he neared the poop, and it was with a smile that he greeted the mate, emerging from the cabin picking his teeth.

"How soon will you have the jib-boom ready to heave out?" he inquired.

"As soon as we can get steam up in the donkey," replied the mate.

The captain went down to the cabin patting his pocket. The sea had a more normal heave to it now, and a little breeze was coming from the westward.

"A waste of time," he said, "but it can't be helped. Let them fuss it out. I may as well have a sleep."

He threw himself down on his bunk, and drifted off into pleasant dreams.

The mate went forward to the forecastle. He shouted down to the men:

"Turn to, men, I've a piece of good news for you."

The crew crowded around him.

"If we sail the schooner across a hundred and eighty before twelve o'clock to-night, we'll all have Christmas to-morrow."

While he was explaining this great good news, a volley of oaths sizzled from the donkey-room, followed by the owner of the voice that uttered them, and the donkeyman came on deck with a hammer in his hand.

"I'll brain the savage that shtole me valve. Shtand where yez are!" he roared. "Me hammer hangs over yez until yez are inshpected!"

Worn with fatigue and disappointment, there was some-

thing so tragic at that moment about Dennis Fay that it appealed even to those much-abused men. Silent and submissive they stood, while, with hammer suspended, he asked them one by one, "Did ye shteal me valve?" and each one answered convincingly, "No."

"Begorra thin, ye'd have me belave it walked off. Where is it, thin? Ah! and it's the bad day I iver ——" His words trailed off formlessly, except for occasional illumination of oaths like smelted slag. He stood there before them, a very picture of misery, his lower lip twitching, one wandering hand aimlessly clawing long strands of hair that hung down like greasy rope-ends. The more he thought of it the angrier he got; and the crew stood as he had lined them up, watching him.

At last the mate approached him gently, and whispered in his ear. He nodded, and the two went into the donkey-room. The crew were left speechless in the face of the fresh disaster that had crushed their new hope. Pete was the first to speak, and his voice had a sad ring to it.

"That's the way with a sailor. He's either ahead or behind, never there when there's anything good for him."

"I'm so sleepy," yawned Gus, "I don't care what becomes of us."

They started to move off, but were held again by the sound of the donkeyman's voice.

"Ha, ha! And it's me Christmas and me bonus he'd be afther bating me out av. Ha, ha, me bucko, it's the Blue Funnel Liners I haven't been sailing on for nothing! And he calls me a beach-comber. Ah, wait till I lay me hands on him!"

"Can you do it?" they heard the mate ask.

"I can, me bye, tin thousand toimes, if I have to burn the heart out av her!"

The mate came out on deck. "Now," said he to the crew, "work, and work with a will. Not a growl out of one of you. We'll slip a day and catch our Christmas. Are you willing, men?"

"We are," they shouted, and limbered up accordingly, and started a race against time, in order to lose time.

On deck halyards were bent on to the boom. Guys to steady it were tied. In the donkey-room Fay worked like one possessed, and chips flew, as he made a hardwood plug to substitute for the stolen valve, and a wild whistle of triumph pierced the walls as he drove it in and lashed it with seizing wire.

Water was poured into the boiler and the fire lighted. The crew were tense with excitement, fearing that the plug would not hold till the boom was out, and morally certain that, if it did not, there would be more than one man burned, and possibly a donkey engine broken past the power of man to repair.

The halyards were taken to the gypsy. The smell of hot grease came from the donkey. Twenty pounds of steam showed in the gauge. The donkeyman was silent now as any sphinx, but his eyes were everywhere; not a nut escaped him, not a rivet. He shoveled more coal into the fire. The crew stood at their posts, waiting for him to give the word to heave away.

Forty pounds showed on the gauge; steam was spluttering and hissing in the cylinder-head. The donkeyman stuck his head out of his room and called, "Shtand away from the blow-off valve!"

As the pressure crept up in the old donkey boiler, the wooden plug commenced to bobble. The mate came running in. "It's no use," he said; "draw the fire; the seizings won't hold."

"Shure it's not me ye know at all, at all," answered the donkeyman, "for it's not me fire I'd dhraw. If the seizin's don't hold, I'll blow her up before I'll give her up! That's Dinnis Fay fer ye, and his father before him!"

Steam started to whistle out of the blow-off valve. The donkey-room was moist with it. Something had to be done and done quickly. The beach-combing engineer seemed as live as the forces he was trying to control.

With one wild motion to the mate to get to his post, he jumped up on the engine in front of the donkey, seizing as he did so a short length of three-inch plank which he had torn from the floor when he repaired the engine, and had not yet replaced. He stood the three-inch plank on end in place against the wooden plug, to hold it in, and brought all his strength to bear on it in a death grip with his left hand. With his right he could just reach the steam valve that fed the cylinders. Standing there, spread as he was, in the white mist, he looked like the skin of some bear pinned up for curing.

"Are yez ready?" he shouted; and without waiting for an answer started up the Mary Kent's donkey.

There was no need to tell the crew what to do. They bounced about like rubber balls. Up came the spar. The ship vibrated from the whistlings of the donkey; steam seemed to be coming from everywhere. The cook ran out of the galley and took to the rigging; the mate stood on the forecastle head giving anxious orders. Outhauls and downhauls, halyards and guy-ropes were straining with the weight of the new jib-boom.

The donkeyman was growing weaker from his stretched strain, and the heat and steam were suffocating. He shouted for someone to throw water over him. His voice sounded muffled as by many folds of mist. In that convulsion of steam he stood there like a toy that was made to wiggle.

"Avast heaving!" shouted the mate from the forecastle head; "the boom is in place. Stop the donkey. Bela-ay!"

Not one but all of them ran for the donkey-room. Through the fog of steam they saw the donkeyman, still spread out, his teeth stripped, his eyes bulging, every muscle in his body locked. They wrenched his hand from the steam valve and shut it off. As he fell back into their arms, the plank fell from his other hand, and the wooden plug blew out with a noise louder than any hurricane.

The captain jumped out of his bunk and ran to the deck,

scared out of his wits. Coming forward, he saw the donkeyman lying on the fore-hatch. While some of the crew threw salt water over him, others were making sail. No one paid any attention to the master, or answered his questions.

Fay opened his eyes. "Did we get her out?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the mate, and his voice was ragged with emotion; "the jib-boom is in place, Fay; look how the sail is going on her now. You've saved our Christmas."

The donkeyman sat up and rubbed his burned places. His eyes met those of the captain, churning a glowering challenge. It was too much for the master and owner of the Mary Kent. He turned and walked away, replacing the new cigar he had been about to light, and taking instead, from its cache in his vest pocket, an old and battered stub. His walk, as he sought the poop, was bent and weatherbeaten.

A flicker of a smile that showed pain came into Dennis Fay's face. "The beach-comber's bonus will be a taste of turkey for all of yez," he said, addressing the crew.

"Cheers for the donkeyman!" echoed round the ship.

ARTHUR MASON

ARTHUR MASON was born in Ireland in 1876, the son of a well-to-do farmer. He knows the sea from long experience. When only fifteen years old, he ran away from home and for eighteen years sailed around the world before the mast and as master of ships. Although he has for some time been a citizen of the United States, naturalization has not quenched his love of wandering. Australia, South America, and Alaska have in turn called to his outfaring spirit. His first book, *The Flying Bos'un*, appeared in 1920. Since then he has written his autobiography, a new edition of which bears the alluring title, *Wide Seas, and Many Lands*. Lovers of sea tales will enjoy his collection of short stories, *The Cook and the Captain Bold*. Recently he has been a frequent contributor to the *Atlantic Monthly*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. List the words which are new to you but evidently commonplace to Mr. Mason. Find the meaning of those words which are essential to your understanding of the story. Explain why a day is lost by crossing the hundred and eightieth meridian.
2. Which was the better man, the captain or the mate? Compare their conduct in the face of danger. Why did the captain replace his new cigar after the jib-boom was in place? What other character hints can you find in the story?
3. How does Dennis Fay show the fighting spirit of the Irish? Have you read *Namgay Doola*, by Rudyard Kipling? How does Kipling make humorous use of the tradition that Irish blood and a belligerent spirit are synonymous?
4. Write a sketch entitled *Christmas Dinner on Board the Mary Kent.* Have the mate propose a toast to the donkeyman. How would the captain enjoy the dinner? What specific words or phrases will you use to show his chagrin?

Christmas in many guises:

A Stolen Christmas — Mary E. Wilkins Freeman
Christmas Jenny — Mary E. Wilkins Freeman
Christmas Eve on Lonesome — John Fox, Jr.
A Christmas Guest — Selma Lagerlöf
Santa Claus at Simpson's Bar — Bret Harte
A Christmas Carol — Charles Dickens
The First Christmas Tree — Henry van Dyke
A Christmas Present for a Lady — Myra Kelly
Van Bibber's Christmas — Richard Harding Davis

THE FAT OF THE LAND

By ANZIA YEZIERSKA

In an air-shaft so narrow that you could touch the next wall with your bare hands, Hanneh Breineh leaned out and knocked on her neighbor's window.

"Can you loan me your wash-boiler for the clothes?" she called.

Mrs. Pelz threw up the sash.

"The boiler? What's the matter with yours again? Didn't you tell me you had it fixed already last week?"

"A black year on him, the robber, the way he fixed it! If you have no luck in this world, then it's better not to live. There I spent out fifteen cents to stop up one hole, and it runs out another. How I ate out my gall bargaining with him he should let it down to fifteen cents! He wanted yet a quarter, the swindler. Gottuniu! My bitter heart on him for every penny he took from me for nothing!"

"You got to watch all those swindlers, or they'll steal the whites out of your eyes," admonished Mrs. Pelz. "You should have tried out your boiler before you paid him. Wait a minute till I empty out my dirty clothes in a pillow-case; then I'll hand it to you."

Mrs. Pelz returned with the boiler and tried to hand it across to Hanneh Breineh, but the soap-box refrigerator on the window-sill was in the way.

"You got to come in for the boiler yourself," said Mrs. Pelz.

"Wait only till I tie my Sammy on to the high-chair he shouldn't fall on me again. He's so wild that ropes won't hold him."

Hanneh Breineh tied the child in the chair, stuck a pacifier in his mouth, and went in to her neighbor. As she took the boiler Mrs. Pelz said:

"Do you know Mrs. Melker ordered fifty pounds of chicken for her daughter's wedding? And such grand chickens! Shining like gold! My heart melted in me just looking at the flowing fatness of those chickens."

Hanneh Breineh smacked her thin, dry lips, a hungry gleam in her sunken eyes.

"Fifty pounds!" she gasped. "It ain't possible. How do you know?"

"I heard her with my own ears. I saw them with my own eyes. And she said she will chop up the chicken livers with onions and eggs for an appetizer, and then she will buy twenty-five pounds of fish, and cook it sweet and sour with raisins, and she said she will bake all her shtrudels on pure chicken fat."

"Some people work themselves up in the world," sighed Hanneh Breineh. "For them is America flowing with milk and honey. In Savel Mrs. Melker used to get shriveled up from hunger. She and her children used to live on potato-peelings and crusts of dry bread picked out from the barrels; and in America she lives to eat chicken, and apple shtrudels soaking in fat."

"The world is a wheel always turning," philosophized Mrs. Pelz. "Those who were high go down low, and those who've been low go up higher. Who will believe me here in America that in Poland I was a cook in a banker's house? I handled ducks and geese every day. I used to bake coffee-cake with cream so thick you could cut it with a knife."

"And do you think I was a nobody in Poland?" broke in Hanneh Breineh, tears welling in her eyes as the memories of her past rushed over her. "But what's the use of talking? In America money is everything. Who cares who my father or grandfather was in Poland? Without money I'm a living dead one. My head dries out worrying how to get for the children the eating a penny cheaper."

Mrs. Pelz wagged her head, a gnawing envy contracting her features.

"Mrs. Melker had it good from the day she came," she said, begrudgingly. "Right away she sent all her children to the factory, and she began to cook meat for dinner every day. She and her children have eggs and buttered rolls for breakfast each morning like millionaires."

A sudden fall and a baby's scream, and the boiler dropped from Hanneh Breineh's hands as she rushed into her kitchen, Mrs. Pelz after her. They found the high-chair turned on top of the baby.

"Gewalt! Save me! Run for a doctor!" cried Hanneh Breineh, as she dragged the child from under the high-chair. "He's killed! He's killed! My only child! My precious lamb!" she shrieked as she ran back and forth with the screaming infant.

Mrs. Pelz snatched little Sammy from the mother's hands.

"Meshugneh! What are you running around like a crazy, frightening the child? Let me see. Let me tend to him. He ain't killed yet." She hastened to the sink to wash the child's face, and discovered a swelling lump on his forehead. "Have you a quarter in your house?" she asked.

"Yes, I got one," replied Hanneh Breineh, climbing on a chair. "I got to keep it on a high shelf where the children can't get it."

Mrs. Pelz seized the quarter Hanneh Breineh handed down to her.

"Now pull your left eyelid three times while I'm pressing the quarter, and you'll see the swelling go down."

Hanneh Breineh took the child again in her arms, shaking and cooing over it and caressing it.

"Ah-ah-ah, Sammy! Ah-ah-ah-ah, little lamb! Ah-ah-ah, little bird! Ah-ah-ah-ah, precious heart! Oh, you saved my life; I thought he was killed," gasped Hanneh Breineh, turning to Mrs. Pelz. "Oi-i!" she sighed, "a mother's heart! Always in fear over her children. The minute anything happens to them all life goes out of me. I lose my head and I don't know where I am any more."

"No wonder the child fell," admonished Mrs. Pelz. "You should have a red ribbon or red beads on his neck to keep away the evil eye. Wait. I got something in my machine-drawer."

Mrs. Pelz returned, bringing the boiler and a red string, which she tied about the child's neck while the mother proceeded to fill the boiler.

A little later Hanneh Breineh again came into Mrs. Pelz's kitchen, holding Sammy in one arm and in the other an apronful of potatoes. Putting the child down on the floor, she seated herself on the unmade kitchen-bed and began to peel the potatoes in her apron.

"Woe to me!" sobbed Hanneh Breineh. "To my bitter luck there ain't no end. With all my other troubles, the stove got broke. I lighted the fire to boil the clothes, and it's to get choked with smoke. I paid rent only a week ago, and the agent don't want to fix it. A thunder should strike him! He only comes for the rent, and if anything has to be fixed, then he don't want to hear nothing.

"Why comes it to me so hard?" went on Hanneh Breineh, the tears streaming down her cheeks. "I can't stand it no more. I came in to you for a minute to run away from my troubles. It's only when I sit myself down to peel potatoes or nurse the baby that I take time to draw a breath, and beg only for death."

Mrs. Pelz, accustomed to Hanneh Breineh's bitter outbursts, continued her scrubbing.

"Ut!" exclaimed Hanneh Breineh, irritated at her neighbor's silence. "What are you tearing up the world with your cleaning? What's the use to clean up when everything only gets dirty again?"

"I got to shine up my house for the holidays."

"You've got it so good nothing lays on your mind but to clean your house. Look on this little bloodsucker," said Hanneh Breineh, pointing to the wizened child, made prematurely solemn from starvation and neglect. "Could anybody keep that brat clean? I wash him one minute,

and he is dirty the minute after." Little Sammy grew frightened and began to cry. "Shut up!" ordered the mother, picking up the child to nurse it again. "Can't you see me take a rest for a minute?"

The hungry child began to cry at the top of its weakened lungs.

"Na, na, you glutton." Hanneh Breineh took out a dirty pacifier from her pocket and stuffed it into the baby's mouth. The grave, pasty-faced infant shrank into a panic of fear, and chewed the nipple nervously, clinging to it with both his thin little hands.

"For what did I need yet the sixth one?" groaned Hanneh Breineh, turning to Mrs. Pelz. "Wasn't it enough five mouths to feed? If I didn't have this child on my neck, I could turn myself around and earn a few cents." She wrung her hands in a passion of despair. "Gottuniu! The earth should only take it before it grows up!"

"Shah! Shah!" reproved Mrs. Pelz. "Pity yourself on the child. Let it grow up already so long as it is here. See how frightened it look on you." Mrs. Pelz took the child in her arms and petted it. "The poor little lamb! What did it done you should hate it so?"

Hanneh Breineh pushed Mrs. Pelz away from her.

"To whom can I open the wounds of my heart?" she moaned. "Nobody has pity on me. You don't believe me, nobody believes me until I'll fall down like a horse in the middle of the street. Oi weh! Mine life is so black for my eyes! Some mothers got luck. A child gets run over by a car, some fall from a window, some burn themselves up with a match, some get choked with diphtheria, but no death takes mine away."

"God from the world, stop cursing!" admonished Mrs. Pelz. "What do you want from the poor children? Is it their fault that their father makes small wages? Why do you let it all out on them?" Mrs. Pelz sat down beside Hanneh Breineh. "Wait only till your children get old

enough to go to the shop and earn money," she consoled. "Push only through those few years while they are yet small; your sun will begin to shine; you will live on the fat of the land, when they begin to bring you in the wages each week."

Hanneh Breineh refused to be comforted.

"Till they are old enough to go to the shop and earn money they'll eat the head off my bones," she wailed. "If you only knew the fights I got by each meal. Maybe I gave Abe a bigger piece of bread than Fanny. Maybe Fanny got a little more soup in her plate than Jake. Eating is dearer than diamonds. Potatoes went up a cent on a pound, and milk is only for millionaires. And once a week, when I buy a little meat for the Sabbath, the butcher weighs it for me like gold, with all the bones in it. When I come to lay the meat out on a plate and divide it up, there ain't nothing to it but bones. Before, he used to throw me in a piece of fat extra or a piece of lung, but now you got to pay for everything, even for a bone to the soup."

"Never mind; you'll yet come out from all your troubles. Just as soon as your children get old enough to get their working papers the more children you got, the more money you'll have."

"Why should I fool myself with the false shine of hope? Don't I know it's already my black luck not to have it good in this world? Do you think American children will right away give everything they earn to their mother?"

"I know what is with you the matter," said Mrs. Pelz. "You didn't eat yet to-day. When it is empty in the stomach, the whole world looks black. Come, only let me give you something good to taste in the mouth; that will freshen you up." Mrs. Pelz went to the cupboard and brought out the saucepan of gefülte fish that she had cooked for dinner and placed it on the table in front of Hanneh Breineh. "Give a taste my fish," she said, taking one slice on a spoon, and handing it to Hanneh Breineh with a piece of bread. "I wouldn't give it to you on a

plate because I just cleaned up my house, and I don't want to dirty up more dishes."

"What, am I a stranger you should have to serve me on a plate yet!" cried Hanneh Breineh, snatching the fish in her trembling fingers.

"Oi weh! How it melts through all the bones!" she exclaimed, brightening as she ate. "May it be for good luck to us all!" she exulted, waving aloft the last precious bite.

Mrs. Pelz was so flattered that she even ladled up a spoonful of gravy.

"There is a bit of onion and carrot in it," she said, as she handed it to her neighbor.

Hanneh Breineh sipped the gravy drop by drop, like a connoisseur sipping wine.

"Ah-h-h! A taste of that gravy lifts me up to heaven!" As she disposed leisurely of the slice of onion and carrot she relaxed and expanded and even grew jovial. "Let us wish all our troubles on the Russian Czar! Let him burst with our worries for rent! Let him get shriveled with our hunger for bread! Let his eyes dry out of his head looking for work!

"Shah! I'm forgetting from everything," she exclaimed, jumping up. "It must be eleven or soon twelve, and my children will be right away out of school and fall on me like a pack of wild wolves. I better quick run to the market and see what cheaper I can get for a quarter."

Because of the lateness of her coming, the stale bread at the nearest bakeshop was sold out, and Hanneh Breineh had to trudge from shop to shop in search of the usual bargain, and spent nearly an hour to save two cents.

In the meantime the children returned from school, and, finding the door locked, climbed through the fire escape, and entered the house through the window. Seeing nothing on the table, they rushed to the stove. Abe pulled a steaming potato out of the boiling pot, and so scalded his fingers that the potato fell to the floor; whereupon the three others pounced on it.

"It was my potato," cried Abe, blowing his burned fingers, while with the other hand and his foot he cuffed and kicked the three who were struggling on the floor. A wild fight ensued, and the potato was smashed under Abe's foot amid shouts and screams. Hanneh Breineh, on the stairs, heard the noise of her famished brood, and topped their cries with curses and invectives.

"They are here already, the savages! They are here already to shorten my life! They heard you all over the hall, in all the houses around!"

The children, disregarding her words, pounced on her market-basket, shouting ravenously: "Mamma, I'm hungry! What more do you got to eat?"

They tore the bread and herring out of Hanneh Breineh's basket and devoured it in starved savagery, clamoring for more.

"Murderers!" screamed Hanneh Breineh, goaded beyond endurance. "What are you tearing from me my flesh? From where should I steal to give you more? Here I had already a pot of potatoes and a whole loaf of bread and two herrings, and you swallowed it down in the wink of an eye. I have to have Rockefeller's millions to fill your stomachs."

All at once Hanneh Breineh became aware that Benny was missing. "Oi weh!" she burst out, wringing her hands in a new wave of woe, "where is Benny? Didn't he come home yet from school?"

She ran out into the hall, opened the grime-coated window, and looked up and down the street; but Benny was nowhere in sight.

"Abe, Jake, Fanny, quick, find Benny!" entreated Hanneh Breineh, as she rushed back into the kitchen. But the children, anxious to snatch a few minutes' play before the school-call, dodged past her and hurried out.

With the baby on her arm, Hanneh Breineh hastened to the kindergarten.

"Why are you keeping Benny here so long?" she

shouted at the teacher as she flung open the door. "If you had my bitter heart, you would send him home long ago and not wait till I got to come for him."

The teacher turned calmly and consulted her record-cards.

"Benny Safron? He wasn't present this morning."

"Not here?" shrieked Hanneh Breineh. "I pushed him out myself he should go. The children didn't want to take him, and I had no time. Woe is me! Where is my child?" She began pulling her hair and beating her breast as she ran into the street.

Mrs. Pelz was busy at a pushcart, picking over some spotted apples, when she heard the clamor of an approaching crowd. A block off she recognized Hanneh Breineh, her hair disheveled, her clothes awry, running toward her with her yelling baby in her arms, the crowd following.

"Friend mine," cried Hanneh Breineh, falling on Mrs. Pelz's neck, "I lost my Benny, the best child of all my children." Tears streamed down her red, swollen eyes as she sobbed. "Benny! mine heart, mine life! Oi-i-i!"

Mrs. Pelz took the frightened baby out of the mother's arms.

"Still yourself a little! See how you're frightening your child."

"Woe to me! Where is my Benny? Maybe he's killed already by a car. Maybe he fainted away from hunger. He didn't eat nothing all day long. Gottuniu! Pity yourself on me!"

She lifted her hands full of tragic entreaty.

"People, my child! Get me my child! I'll go crazy out of my head! Get me my child, or I'll take poison before your eyes!"

"Still yourself a little!" pleaded Mrs. Pelz.

"Talk not to me!" cried Hanneh Breineh, wringing her hands. "You're having all your children. I lost mine. Every good luck comes to other people. But I didn't live

yet to see a good day in my life. Mine only joy, mine Benny, is lost away from me."

The crowd followed Hanneh Breineh as she wailed through the streets, leaning on Mrs. Pelz. By the time she returned to her house the children were back from school; but seeing that Benny was not there, she chased them out in the street, crying:

"Out of here, you robbers, gluttons! Go find Benny!" Hanneh Breineh crumpled into a chair in utter prostration. "Oi weh! he's lost! Mine life; my little bird; mine only joy! How many nights I spent nursing him when he had the measles! And all that I suffered for weeks and months when he had the whooping-cough! How the eyes went out of my head till I learned him how to walk, till I learned him how to talk! And such a smart child! If I lost all the others, it wouldn't tear me so by the heart."

She worked herself up into such a hysteria, crying, and tearing her hair, and hitting her head with her knuckles, that at last she fell into a faint. It took some time before Mrs. Pelz, with the aid of neighbors, revived her.

"Benny, mine angel!" she moaned as she opened her eyes.

Just then a policeman came in with the lost Benny.

"Na, na, here you got him already!" said Mrs. Pelz. "Why did you carry on so for nothing? Why did you tear up the world like a crazy?"

The child's face was streaked with tears as he cowered, frightened and forlorn. Hanneh Breineh sprang toward him, slapping his cheeks, boxing his ears, before the neighbors could rescue him from her.

"Woe on your head!" cried the mother. "Where did you lost yourself? Ain't I got enough worries on my head than to go around looking for you? I didn't have yet a minute's peace from that child since he was born!"

"See a crazy mother!" remonstrated Mrs. Pelz, rescuing Benny from another beating. "Such a mouth! With

one breath she blesses him when he is lost, and with the other breath she curses him when he is found."

Hanneh Breineh took from the window-sill a piece of herring covered with swarming flies, and putting it on a slice of dry bread, she filled a cup of tea that had been stewing all day, and dragged Benny over to the table to eat.

But the child, choking with tears, was unable to touch the food.

"Go eat!" commanded Hanneh Breineh. "Eat and choke yourself eating!"

"Maybe she won't remember me no more. Maybe the servant won't let me in," thought Mrs. Pelz, as she walked by the brownstone house on Eighty-fourth Street where she had been told Hanneh Breineh now lived. At last she summoned up enough courage to climb the steps. She was all out of breath as she rang the bell with trembling fingers. "Oi weh! even the outside smells riches and plenty! Such curtains! And shades on all windows like by millionaires! Twenty years ago she used to eat from the pot to the hand, and now she lives in such a palace."

A whiff of steam-heated warmth swept over Mrs. Pelz as the door opened, and she saw her old friend of the tenements dressed in silk and diamonds like a being from another world.

"Mrs. Pelz, is it you!" cried Hanneh Breineh, overjoyed at the sight of her former neighbor. "Come right in. Since when are you back in New York?"

"We came last week," mumbled Mrs. Pelz, as she was led into a richly carpeted reception-room.

"Make yourself comfortable. Take off your shawl," urged Hanneh Breineh.

But Mrs. Pelz only drew her shawl more tightly around her, a keen sense of her poverty gripping her as she gazed, abashed by the luxurious wealth that shone from every corner.

"This shawl covers up my rags," she said, trying to hide her shabby sweater.

"I'll tell you what; come right into the kitchen," suggested Hanneh Breineh. "The servant is away for this afternoon, and we can feel more comfortable there. I can breathe like a free person in my kitchen when the girl has her day out."

Mrs. Pelz glanced about her in an excited daze. Never in her life had she seen anything so wonderful as a white-tiled kitchen, with its glistening porcelain sink and the aluminum pots and pans that shone like silver.

"Where are you staying now?" asked Hanneh Breineh, as she pinned an apron over her silk dress.

"I moved back to Delancey Street, where we used to live," replied Mrs. Pelz, as she seated herself cautiously in a white enamel chair.

"Oi weh! What grand times we had in that old house when we were neighbors!" sighed Hanneh Breineh, looking at her old friend with misty eyes.

"You still think on Delancey Street? Haven't you more high-class neighbors uptown here?"

"A good neighbor is not to be found every day," deplored Hanneh Breineh. "Uptown here, where each lives in his own house, nobody cares if the person next door is dying or going crazy from loneliness. It ain't anything like we used to have it in Delancey Street, when we could walk into one another's rooms without knocking, and borrow a pinch of salt or a pot to cook in."

Hanneh Breineh went over to the pantry shelf.

"We are going to have a bite right here on the kitchen table like on Delancey Street. So long there's no servant to watch us we can eat what we please."

"Oi! How it waters my mouth with appetite, the smell of the herring and onion!" chuckled Mrs. Pelz, sniffing the welcome odors with greedy pleasure.

Hanneh Breineh pulled a dish towel from the rack and threw one end of it to Mrs. Pelz.

"So long there's no servant around, we can use it together for a napkin. It's dirty, anyhow. How it freshens up my heart to see you!" she rejoiced, as she poured out her tea into a saucer. "If you would only know how I used to beg my daughter to write for me a letter to you, but these American children, what is to them a mother's feelings?"

"What are you talking!" cried Mrs. Pelz. "The whole world rings with you and your children. Everybody is envying you. Tell me how began your luck?"

"You heard how my husband died with consumption," replied Hanneh Breineh. "The five hundred dollars lodge money gave me the first lift in life, and I opened a little grocery store. Then my son Abe married himself to a girl with a thousand dollars. That started him in business, and now he has the biggest shirt-waist factory on West Twenty-ninth Street."

"Yes, I heard your son had a factory." Mrs. Pelz hesitated and stammered, "I'll tell you the truth. What I came to ask you — I thought maybe you would beg your son Abe if he would give my husband a job."

"Why not?" said Hanneh Breineh. "He keeps more than five hundred hands. I'll ask him if he should take in Mr. Pelz."

"Long years on you, Hanneh Breineh! You'll save my life if you could only help my husband get work."

"Of course my son will help him. All my children like to do good. My daughter Fanny is a milliner on Fifth Avenue, and she takes in the poorest girls in her shop and even pays them sometimes while they learn the trade." Hanneh Breineh's face lit up, and her chest filled with pride as she enumerated the successes of her children. "And my son Benny he wrote a play on Broadway and he gave away more than a hundred free tickets for the first night."

"Benny? The one who used to get lost from home all the time? You always did love that child more than all the rest. And what is Sammy your baby doing?"

"He ain't a baby no longer. He goes to college and quarterbacks the football team. They can't get along without him.

"And my son Jake, I nearly forgot him. He began collecting rent in Delancey Street, and now he is boss of renting the swellest apartment-houses on Riverside Drive."

"What did I tell you? In America children are like money in the bank," purred Mrs. Pelz, as she pinched and patted Hanneh Breineh's silk sleeve. "Oi weh! How it shines from you! You ought to kiss the air and dance for joy and happiness. It is such a bitter frost outside, a pail of coal is so dear, and you got it so warm with steam heat. I had to pawn my feather bed to have enough for the rent, and you are rolling in money."

"Yes, I got it good in some ways, but money ain't everything," sighed Hanneh Breineh.

"You ain't yet satisfied?"

"But here I got no friends," complained Hanneh Breineh.

"Friends?" queried Mrs. Pelz. "What greater friend is there on earth than the dollar?"

"Oi! Mrs. Pelz; if you would only look into my heart! I'm so choked up! You know they say a cow has a long tongue, but can't talk." Hanneh Breineh shook her head wistfully, and her eyes filmed with inward brooding. "My children give me everything from the best. When I was sick, they got me a nurse by day and one by night. They bought me the best wine. If I asked for dove's milk, they would buy it for me; but — but — I can't talk myself out in their language. They want to make me over for an American lady, and I'm different." Tears cut their way under her eyelids with a pricking pain as she went on: "When I was poor, I was free, and could holler and do what I like in my own house. Here I got to lie still like a mouse under a broom. Between living up to my Fifth-Avenue daughter and keeping up with the servants, I am like a sinner in the next world that is thrown from one hell

to another." The doorbell rang, and Hanneh Breineh jumped up with a start.

"Oi weh! It must be the servant back already!" she exclaimed, as she tore off her apron. "Oi weh! Let's quickly put the dishes together in a dish-pan. If she sees I eat on the kitchen table, she will look on me like the dirt under her feet."

Mrs. Pelz seized her shawl in haste.

"I better run home quick in my rags before your servant sees me."

"I'll speak to Abe about the job," said Hanneh Breineh, as she pushed a bill into the hand of Mrs. Pelz, who edged out as the servant entered.

"I'm having fried potato lotkes special for you, Benny," said Hanneh Breineh, as the children gathered about the table for the family dinner given in honor of Benny's success with his new play. "Do you remember how you used to lick the fingers from them?"

"Oh, mother!" reproved Fanny. "Any one hearing you would think we were still in the pushcart district."

"Stop your nagging, sis, and let ma alone," commanded Benny, patting his mother's arm affectionately. "I'm home only once a month. Let her feed me what she pleases. My stomach is bomb-proof."

"Do I hear that the President is coming to your play?" said Abe, as he stuffed a napkin over his diamond-studded shirt-front.

"Why shouldn't he come?" returned Benny. "The critics say it's the greatest antidote for the race hatred created by the war. If you want to know, he is coming tonight; and what's more, our box is next to the President's."

"Nu, mammeh," sallied Jake, "did you ever dream in Delancey Street that we should rub sleeves with the President?"

"I always said that Benny had more head than the rest of you," replied the mother.

As the laughter died away, Jake went on:

"Honor you are getting plenty, but how much mezummen does this play bring you? Can I invest any of it in real estate for you?"

"I'm getting ten per cent royalties of the gross receipts," replied the youthful playwright.

"How much is that?" queried Hanneh Breineh.

"Enough to buy up all your fish-markets in Delancey Street," laughed Abe in good-natured raillery at his mother.

Her son's jest cut like a knife-thrust in her heart. She felt her heart ache with the pain that she was shut out from their successes. Each added triumph only widened the gulf. And when she tried to bridge this gulf by asking questions, they only thrust her back upon herself.

"Your fame has even helped me get my hat trade solid with the Four Hundred," put in Fanny. "You bet I let Mrs. Van Suyden know that our box is next to the President's. She said she would drop in to meet you. Of course she let on to me that she hadn't seen the play yet, though my designer said she saw her there on the opening night."

"Oh, gosh, the toadies!" sneered Benny. "Nothing so sickens you with success as the way people who once shoved you off the sidewalk come crawling to you on their stomachs begging you to dine with them."

"Say, that leading man of yours, he's some class!" cried Fanny. "That's the man I'm looking for. Will you invite him to supper after the theater?"

The playwright turned to his mother.

"Say, ma," he said, laughingly, "how would you like a real actor for a son-in-law?"

"She should worry," mocked Sam. "She'll be discussing with him the future of the Greek drama. Too bad it doesn't happen to be Warfield, or mother could give him tips on the 'Auctioneer.'"

Jake turned to his mother with a covert grin.

"I guess you'd have no objection if Fanny got next to Benny's leading man. He makes at least fifteen hundred a week. That wouldn't be such a bad addition to the family, would it?"

Again the bantering tone stabbed Hanneh Breineh. Everything in her began to tremble and break loose.

"Why do you ask me?" she cried, throwing her napkin into her plate. "Do I count for a person in this house? If I'll say something, will you even listen to me? What is to me the grandest man that my daughter could pick out? Another enemy in my house! Another person to shame himself from me!" She swept in her children in one glance of despairing anguish as she rose from the table. "What worth is an old mother to American children? The President is coming to-night to the theater, and none of you asked me to go." Unable to check the rising tears, she fled toward the kitchen and banged the door.

They all looked at one another guiltily.

"Say, sis," Benny called out sharply, "what sort of frame-up is this? Haven't you told mother that she was to go with us to-night?"

"Yes — I ——" Fanny bit her lips as she fumbled evasively for words. "I asked her if she wouldn't mind my taking her some other time."

"Now you have made a mess of it!" fumed Benny. "Mother'll be too hurt to go now."

"Well, I don't care," snapped Fanny. "I can't appear with mother in a box at the theater. Can I introduce her to Mrs. Van Suyden? And suppose your leading man should ask to meet me?"

"Take your time, sis. He hasn't asked yet," scoffed Benny.

"The more reason I shouldn't spoil my chances. You know mother. She'll spill the beans that we come from Delancey Street the minute we introduce her anywhere. Must I always have the black shadow of my past trailing after me?"

"But have you no feelings for mother?" admonished Abe.

"I've tried harder than all of you to do my duty. I've *lived* with her." She turned angrily upon them. "I've borne the shame of mother while you bought her off with a present and a treat here and there. God knows how hard I tried to civilize her so as not to have to blush with shame when I take her anywhere. I dressed her in the most stylish Paris models, but Delancey Street sticks out from every inch of her. Whenever she opens her mouth, I'm done for. You fellows had your chance to rise in the world because a man is free to go up as high as he can reach up to, but I, with all my style and pep, can't get a man my equal because a girl is always judged by her mother."

They were silenced by her vehemence, and unconsciously turned to Benny.

"I guess we all tried to do our best for mother," said Benny, thoughtfully. "But wherever there is growth, there is pain and heartbreak. The trouble with us is that the ghetto of the Middle Ages and the children of the twentieth century have to live under one roof, and ——"

A sound of crashing dishes came from the kitchen, and the voice of Hanneh Breineh resounded through the dining-room as she wreaked her pent-up fury on the helpless servant.

"Oh, my nerves! I can't stand it any more! There will be no girl again for another week!" cried Fanny.

"Oh, let up on the old lady," protested Abe. "Since she can't take it out on us any more, what harm is it if she cusses the servants?"

"If you fellows had to chase around employment agencies, you wouldn't see anything funny about it. Why can't we move into a hotel that will do away with the need of servants altogether?"

"I got it better," said Jake, consulting a notebook from his pocket. "I have on my list an apartment on Riverside Drive where there's only a small kitchenette, but we

can do away with the cooking, for there is a dining service in the building."

The new Riverside apartment to which Hanneh Breineh was removed by her socially ambitious children was for the habitually active mother an empty desert of enforced idleness. Deprived of her kitchen, Hanneh Breineh felt robbed of the last reason for her existence. Cooking and marketing and puttering busily with pots and pans gave her an excuse for living and struggling and bearing up with her children. The lonely idleness of Riverside Drive stunned all her senses and arrested all her thoughts. It gave her that choked sense of being cut off from air, from life, from everything warm and human. The cold indifference, the each-for-himself look in the eyes of the people about her were like stinging slaps in the face. Even the children had nothing real or human in them. They were starched and stiff miniatures of their elders.

But the most unendurable part of the stifling life on Riverside Drive was being forced to eat in the public dining-room. No matter how hard she tried to learn polite table manners, she always found people staring at her, and her daughter rebuking her for eating with the wrong fork or guzzling the soup or staining the cloth.

In a fit of rebellion Hanneh Breineh resolved never to go down to the public dining-room again, but to make use of the gas-stove in the kitchenette to cook her own meals. That very day she rode down to Delancey Street and purchased a new market-basket. For some time she walked among the haggling pushcart venders, relaxing and swimming in the warm waves of her old familiar past.

A fish-peddler held up a large carp in his black, hairy hand and waved it dramatically:

"Women! Women! Fourteen cents a pound!"

He ceased his raucous shouting as he saw Hanneh Breineh in her rich attire approach his cart.

"How much?" she asked, pointing to the fattest carp.

"Fifteen cents, lady," said the peddler, smirking as he raised his price.

"Swindler! Didn't I hear you call fourteen cents?" shrieked Hanneh Breineh, exultingly, the spirit of the penny chase surging in her blood. Diplomatically, Hanneh Breineh turned as if to go, and the fisherman seized her basket in frantic fear.

"I should live; I'm losing money on the fish, lady," whined the peddler. "I'll let it down to thirteen cents for you only."

"Two pounds for a quarter, and not a penny more," said Hanneh Breineh, thrilling again with the rare sport of bargaining, which had been her chief joy in the good old days of poverty.

"Nu, I want to make the first sale for good luck." The peddler threw the fish on the scale.

As he wrapped up the fish, Hanneh Breineh saw the driven look of worry in his haggard eyes, and when he counted out the change from her dollar, she waved it aside. "Keep it for your luck," she said, and hurried off to strike a new bargain at a pushcart of onions.

Hanneh Breineh returned triumphantly with her purchases. The basket under her arm gave forth the old, homelike odors of herring and garlic, while the scaly tail of a four-pound carp protruded from its newspaper wrapping. A gilded placard on the door of the apartment-house proclaimed that all merchandise must be delivered through the trade entrance in the rear, but Hanneh Breineh with her basket strode proudly through the marble-paneled hall and rang nonchalantly for the elevator.

The uniformed hall-man, erect, expressionless, frigid with dignity, stepped forward:

"Just a minute, madam. I'll call a boy to take up your basket for you."

Hanneh Breineh, glaring at him, jerked the basket savagely from his hands. "Mind your own business!" she retorted. "I'll take it up myself. Do you think you're a Russian policeman to boss me in my own house?"

Angry lines appeared on the countenance of the representative of social decorum.

"It is against the rules, madam," he said, stiffly.

"You should sink into the earth with all your rules and brass buttons. Ain't this America? Ain't this a free country? Can't I take up in my own house what I buy with my own money?" cried Hanneh Breineh, reveling in the opportunity to shower forth the volley of invectives that had been suppressed in her for the weeks of deadly dignity of Riverside Drive.

In the midst of this uproar Fanny came in with Mrs. Van Suyden. Hanneh Breineh rushed over to her, crying:

"This bossy policeman won't let me take up my basket in the elevator."

The daughter, unnerved with shame and confusion, took the basket in her white-gloved hand and ordered the hall-boy to take it around to the regular delivery entrance.

Hanneh Breineh was so hurt by her daughter's apparent defense of the hall-man's rules that she utterly ignored Mrs. Van Suyden's greeting and walked up the seven flights of stairs out of sheer spite.

"You see the tragedy of my life?" broke out Fanny, turning to Mrs. Van Suyden.

"You poor child! You go right up to your dear, old lady mother, and I'll come some other time."

Instantly Fanny regretted her words. Mrs. Van Suyden's pity only roused her wrath the more against her mother.

Breathless from climbing the stairs, Hanneh Breineh entered the apartment just as Fanny tore the faultless millinery creation from her head and threw it on the floor in a rage.

"Mother, you are the ruination of my life! You have driven away Mrs. Van Suyden, as you have driven away all my best friends. What do you think we got this apartment for but to get rid of your fish smells and your brawls with the servants? And here you come with a basket on

your arm as if you just landed from steerage! And this afternoon, of all times, when Benny is bringing his leading man to tea. When will you ever stop disgracing us?"

"When I'm dead," said Hanneh Breineh, grimly. "When the earth will cover me up, then you'll be free to go your American way. I'm not going to make myself over for a lady on Riverside Drive. I hate you and all your swell friends. I'll not let myself be choked up here by you or by that hall-boss policeman that is higher in your eyes than your own mother."

"So that's your thanks for all we've done for you?" cried the daughter.

"All you've done for me!" shouted Hanneh Breineh. "What have you done for me? You hold me like a dog on a chain! It stands in the Talmud; some children give their mothers dry bread and water and go to heaven for it, and some give their mother roast duck and go to Gehenna because it's not given with love."

"You want me to love you yet?" raged the daughter. "You knocked every bit of love out of me when I was yet a kid. All the memories of childhood I have is your everlasting cursing and yelling that we were gluttons."

The bell rang sharply, and Hanneh Breineh flung open the door.

"Your groceries, ma'am," said the boy.

Hanneh Breineh seized the basket from him, and with a vicious fling sent it rolling across the room, strewing its contents over the Persian rugs and inlaid floor. Then seizing her hat and coat, she stormed out of the apartment and down the stairs.

Mr. and Mrs. Pelz sat crouched and shivering over their meager supper when the door opened, and Hanneh Breineh in fur coat and plumed hat charged into the room.

"I come to cry out to you my bitter heart," she sobbed. "Woe is me! It is so black for my eyes!"

"What is the matter with you, Hanneh Breineh?" cried Mrs. Pelz in bewildered alarm.

"I am turned out of my own house by the brass-buttoned policeman that bosses the elevator. Oi-i-i-i! Weh-h-h-h! What have I from my life? The whole world rings with my son's play. Even the President came to see it, and I, his mother, have not seen it yet. My heart is dying in me like in a prison," she went on wailing. "I am starved out for a piece of real eating. In that swell restaurant is nothing but napkins and forks and lettuce-leaves. There are a dozen plates to every bite of food. And it looks so fancy on the plate, but it's nothing but straw in the mouth. I'm starving, but I can't swallow down their American eating."

"Hanneh Breineh," said Mrs. Pelz, "you are sinning before God. Look on your fur coat; it alone would feed a whole family for a year. I never had yet a piece of fur trimming on a coat, and you are in fur from the neck to the feet. I never had yet a piece of feather on a hat, and your hat is all feathers."

"What are you envying me?" protested Hanneh Breineh. "What have I from all my fine furs and feathers when my children are strangers to me? All the fur coats in the world can't warm up the loneliness inside my heart. All the grandest feathers can't hide the bitter shame in my face that my children shame themselves from me."

Hanneh Breineh suddenly loomed over them like some ancient, heroic figure of the Bible, condemning unrighteousness.

"Why should my children shame themselves from me? From where did they get the stuff to work themselves up in the world? Did they get it from the air? How did they get all their smartness to rise over the people around them? Why don't children of born American mothers write my Benny's plays? It is I, who never had a chance to be a person, who gave him the fire in his head. If I would have had a chance to go to school and learn the language, what couldn't I have been? It is I and my mother and my mother's mother and my father and fa-

ther's father who had such a black life in Poland, it is our choked thoughts and feelings that are flaming up in my children and making them great in America. And yet they shame themselves from me!"

For a moment Mr. and Mrs. Pelz were hypnotized by the sweep of her words. Then Hanneh Breineh sank into a chair in utter exhaustion. She began to weep bitterly, her body shaking with sobs.

"Woe is me! For what did I suffer and hope on my children? A bitter old age — my end. I'm so lonely!"

All the dramatic fire seemed to have left her. The spell was broken. They saw the Hanneh Breineh of old, ever discontented, ever complaining even in the midst of riches and plenty.

"Hanneh Breineh," said Mrs. Pelz, "the only trouble with you is that you got it too good. People will tear the eyes out of your head because you're complaining yet. If I only had your fur coat! If I only had your diamonds! I have nothing. You have everything. You are living on the fat of the land. You go right back home and thank God that you don't have my bitter lot."

"You got to let me stay here with you," insisted Hanneh Breineh. "I'll not go back to my children except when they bury me. When they will see my dead face, they will understand how they killed me."

Mrs. Pelz glanced nervously at her husband. They barely had enough covering for their one bed; how could they possibly lodge a visitor?

"I don't want to take up your bed," said Hanneh Breineh. "I don't care if I have to sleep on the floor or on the chairs, but I'll stay here for the night."

Seeing that she was bent on staying, Mr. Pelz prepared to sleep by putting a few chairs next to the trunk, and Hanneh Breineh was invited to share the rickety bed with Mrs. Pelz.

The mattress was full of lumps and hollows. Hanneh Breineh lay cramped and miserable, unable to stretch out

her limbs. For years she had been accustomed to hair mattresses and ample woolen blankets, so that though she covered herself with her fur coat, she was too cold to sleep. But worse than the cold were the creeping things on the wall. And as the lights were turned low, the mice came through the broken plaster and raced across the floor. The foul odors of the kitchen-sink added to the night of horrors

"Are you going back home?" asked Mrs. Pelz, as Hanneh Breineh put on her hat and coat the next morning.

"I don't know where I'm going," she replied, as she put a bill into Mrs. Pelz's hand.

For hours Hanneh Breineh walked through the crowded ghetto streets. She realized that she no longer could endure the sordid ugliness of her past, and yet she could not go home to her children. She only felt that she must go on and on.

In the afternoon a cold, drizzling rain set in. She was worn out from the sleepless night and hours of tramping. With a piercing pain in her heart she at last turned back and boarded the subway for Riverside Drive. She had fled from the marble sepulcher of the Riverside apartment to her old home in the ghetto; but now she knew that she could not live there again. She had outgrown her past by the habits of years of physical comforts, and these material comforts that she could no longer do without choked and crushed the life within her.

A cold shudder went through Hanneh Breineh as she approached the apartment house. Peering through the plate glass of the door, she saw the face of the uniformed hall-man. For a hesitating moment she remained standing in the drizzling rain, unable to enter, and yet knowing full well that she would have to enter.

Then suddenly Hanneh Breineh began to laugh. She realized that it was the first time she had laughed since her children had become rich. But it was the hard laugh of bitter sorrow. Tears streamed down her furrowed cheeks as she walked slowly up the granite steps.

"The fat of the land!" muttered Hanneh Breineh, with a choking sob as the hall-man with immobile face deferentially swung open the door — "the fat of the land!"

ANZIA YEZIERSKA

Born in Russia in 1885 and brought to this country in 1901 by her immigrant parents, Miss Yezierska was one of those who, as President Wilson once said, "were drawn across the ocean by some beckoning finger of hope, by some belief, by some vision of a new kind of justice." All through the hard years of struggle, first as a servant in a newly rich immigrant family and later as a worker in sweat shop and factory, Miss Yezierska followed the vision, feeling always that there was something within her which would one day find expression. In 1918 she began publishing the stories which were later collected under the titles *Hungry Hearts* and *Children of Loneliness*. Her work shows a deep sincerity, a true evaluation of the problems which harass the immigrant in his attempt to adjust himself to American life and ideals.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The first part of this story gives a vivid picture of the struggle for food, shelter, and clothing, the basic existence wants in human life. The children fighting over the boiled potato, the woman trudging from one cheap grocery to another, the raucous-voiced pushcart vender "with the haggard look of worry in his weary eyes" — these are pictures drawn from life. Find other such pictures in this story. How does this vivid picture of the life of the poor point the significance of the title?
2. Is the character of Hannah Breineh consistent throughout the story? Did she love her children? How do you explain Mrs. Pelz's just accusation when Benny is found, "With one breath she blesses him when he is lost, and with the other breath she curses him when he is found"? During the visit of Mrs. Pelz to the Riverside apartment, Hanneh says, "I can breathe like a free person in my kitchen when the girl has her day out." Again she utters the pathetic complaint, "They want to make me over."

How do these words voice the tragedy of her later life? We have said in the introduction that conflict is an important element in a short story. How is this proved in the case of this story?

3. Do you feel that the tragedy in this story is twofold, tragedy for the second generation as well as for the first? How do their problems differ? What does Benny mean when he says, "The trouble with us is that the ghetto of the Middle Ages and the children of the twentieth century have to live under one roof"? Read *Hunger*, by the same author, and note how this story is told from the point of view of the younger generation. What motives lead Shenah to leave her uncle's house, to become a skilled worker in a factory, to refuse Sam Arkin's offer of marriage? Read Fannie Hurst's *Humoresque* and compare her style and treatment of the subject with that of Miss Yezierska. Read Robert Haven Schauffler's poem, *Scum o' the Earth*, and then comment upon Hanneh Breineh's words, "It is our choked thoughts and feelings that are flaming up on my children and making them great in America."
4. Did Mrs. Van Suyden appreciate the difficulties of Fanny's position? Write a conversation between her and her husband in which she relates the encounter in the Riverside apartment. She might be snobbishly scornful or understandingly sympathetic. Choose the attitude which you consider most probable and write the conversation accordingly.

The foreigner in America:
Hunger — Anzia Yezierska
Wings — Anzia Yezierska
Humoresque — Fannie Hurst
The Citizen — James F. Dwyer
Love among the Blackboards — Myra Kelly
Friends — Myra Kelly
Long Ever Ago — Rupert Hughes

THE FACE IN THE WINDOW [1]

By WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY

At nine o'clock this morning Sheriff Crumpett entered our New England town post-office for his mail. From his box he extracted his monthly Grand Army paper and a letter in a long yellow envelope. This envelope bore the return-stamp of a prominent Boston lumber-company. The old man crossed the lobby to the writing-shelf under the Western Union clock, hooked black-rimmed glasses on a big nose and tore a generous inch from the end of the envelope.

The first enclosure which met his eyes was a check. It was heavy and pink and crisp, and was attached to the single sheet of letter-paper with a clip. Impressed into the fabric of the safety-paper were the indelible figures of a protector: *Not over Five Thousand ($5000) Dollars.*

The sheriff read the name of the person to whom it was payable and gulped. His gnarled old hand trembled with excitement as he glanced over the clipped letter and then went through it again.

November 10, 1919

My dear Sheriff:

Enclosed please find my personal check for five thousand dollars. It is made out to Mrs. McBride. Never having known the lady personally, and because you have evidently represented her with the authorities, I am sending it to you for proper delivery. I feel, from your enthusiastic account of her recent experience, that it will give you pleasure to present it to her.

Under the circumstances I do not begrudge the money. When first advised of Ruggam's escape, it was hot-headed

[1] Copyright, 1920, by The Consolidated Magazines Corporation (The Red Book Magazine).

impulse which prompted me to offer a reward so large. The old clan-blood of the Wileys must have made me murder-mad that Ruggam should regain his freedom permanently after the hellish thing he did to my brother. The newspapers heard of it, and then I could not retract.

That, however, is a thing of the past. I always did detest a welcher, and if this money is going to a woman to whom it will be manna from heaven — to use your words — I am satisfied. Convey to her my personal congratulations, gratitude, and best wishes.

Cordially yours
C. V. D. WILEY

"Good old Chris!" muttered the sheriff. "He's rich because he's white." He thrust both check and letter back into the long envelope and headed for the office of our local daily paper at a smart pace.

The earning of five thousand dollars reward-money by Cora McBride made an epochal news-item, and in that night's paper we headlined it accordingly — not omitting proper mention of the sheriff and giving him appropriate credit.

Having so started the announcement permeating through the community, the old man employed the office 'phone and called the local livery-stable. He ordered a rig in which he might drive at once to the McBride house in the northern part of town.

"But half that money ought to be yourn!" protested the proprietor of the stable as the sheriff helped him "gear up the horse" a few minutes later.

"Under the circumstances, Joseph, can you see me takin' it? No; it ain't in me to horn in for no rake-off on one o' the Lord's miracles."

The old man climbed into the sleigh, took the reins from the liveryman and started the horse from the livery yard.

Two weeks before — on Monday, the twenty-seventh of

the past October — the telephone-bell had rung sharply in our newspaper-office a few moments before the paper went to press. Now, the telephone-bell often rings in our newspaper-office a few moments before going to press. The confusion on this particular Monday afternoon, however, resulted from Albany calling on the long-distance. Albany — meaning the nearest office of the international press-association of which our paper is a member — called just so, out of a clear sky, on the day McKinley was assassinated, on the day the Titanic foundered and on the day Austria declared war on Serbia.

The connection was made, and over the wire came the voice of young Stewart, crisp as lettuce.

"Special dispatch . . . Wyndgate, Vermont, October 27th. . . . Ready?"

The editor of our paper answered in the affirmative. The rest of us grouped anxiously around his chair. Stewart proceeded:

"'Hapwell Ruggam, serving a life-sentence for the murder of Deputy Sheriff Martin Wiley at a Lost Nation kitchen-dance two years ago, killed Jacob Lambwell, his guard, and escaped from prison at noon to-day.

"'Ruggam had been given some repair work to do near the outer prison-gate. It was opened to admit a tradesman's automobile. As Guard Lambwell turned to close the gate, Ruggam felled him with his shovel. He escaped to the adjacent railroad-yards, stole a corduroy coat and pair of blue overalls hanging in a switchman's shanty and caught the twelve-forty freight up Green River.'"

Stewart had paused. The editor scribbled frantically. In a few words aside he explained to us what Stewart was sending. Then he ordered the latter to proceed.

"'Freight Number Eight was stopped by telegraph near Norwall. The fugitive, assuming correctly that it was slowing down for search, was seen by a brakeman fleeing across a pasture between the tracks and the eastern edge of Haystack Mountain. Several posses have already

started after him, and sheriffs all through northern New England are being notified.

"'Christopher Wiley, lumber magnate and brother of Ruggam's former victim, on being told of the escape, has offered a reward of five thousand dollars for Ruggam's capture, dead or alive. Guard Lambwell was removed to a hospital, where he died at one-thirty.' ... *All right?*"

The connection was broken, and the editor removed the headpiece. He began giving orders. We were twenty minutes behind usual time with the papers, but we made all the trains.

When the big Duplex was grinding out newsprint with a roar that shook the building, the boys and girls gathered around to discuss the thing which had happened.

The Higgins boy, saucer-eyed over the experience of being "on the inside" during the handling of the first sizable news-story since he had become our local reporter, voiced the interrogation on the faces of other office newcomers.

"Ruggam," the editor explained, "is a poor unfortunate who should have been sent to an asylum instead of the penitentiary. He killed Mart Wiley, a deputy sheriff, at a Lost Nation kitchen-dance two years ago."

"Where's the Lost Nation?"

"It's a term applied to most of the town of Partridgeville in the northern part of the county — an inaccessible district back in the mountains peopled with gone-to-seed stock and half-civilized illiterates who only get into the news when they load up with squirrel whisky and start a programme of progressive hell. Ruggam was the local blacksmith."

"What's a kitchen-dance?"

"Ordinarily a kitchen-dance is harmless enough. But the Lost Nation folks use it as an excuse for a debauch. They gather in some sizable shack, set the stove out into the yard, soak themselves in aromatic spirits of

deviltry and dance from Saturday night until Monday noon ——"

"And this Ruggam killed a sheriff at one of them?"

"He got into a brawl with another chap about his wife. Some one passing saw the fight and sent for an officer. Mart Wiley was deputy, afraid of neither man, God, nor devil. Martin had grown disgusted over the petty crime at these kitchen-dances and started out to clean up this one right. Hap Ruggam killed him. He must have had help, because he first got Mart tied to a tree in the yard. Most of the crowd was pie-eyed by this time, anyhow, and would fight at the drop of a hat. After tying him securely, Ruggam caught up a billet of wood and — and killed him with that."

"Why didn't they electrocute him?" demanded young Higgins.

"Well, the murder wasn't exactly premeditated. Hap wasn't himself; he was drunk — not even able to run away when Sheriff Crumpett arrived in the neighborhood to take him into custody. Then there was Hap's bringing up. All these made extenuating circumstances."

"There was something about Sheriff Wiley's pompadour," suggested our little lady proof-reader.

"Yes," returned the editor. "Mart had a queer head of hair. It was dark and stiff, and he brushed it straight back in a pompadour. When he was angry or excited, it actually rose on his scalp like wire. Hap's counsel made a great fuss over Mart's pompadour and the part it sort of played in egging Hap on. The sight of it, stiffening and rising the way it did, maddened Ruggam so that he beat it down hysterically in retaliation for the many grudges he fancied he owed the officer. No, it was all right to make the sentence life-imprisonment, only it should have been an asylum. Hap's not right. You'd know it without being told. I guess it's his eyes. They aren't mates. They light up weirdly when he's drunk or excited, and if you know what's healthy, you get out of the way."

By eight o'clock that evening most of the valley's deer-hunters, all of the local adventurers who could buy, borrow, or beg a rifle, and the usual quota of high-school sons of thoughtless parents were off on the man-hunt in the eastern mountains.

Among them was Sheriff Crumpett's party. On reaching the timber-line they separated. It was agreed that if any of them found signs of Ruggam, the signal for assistance was five shots in quick succession "and keep shooting at intervals until the rest come up."

We newspaper folk awaited the capture with professional interest and pardonable excitement....

In the northern part of our town, a mile out on the Wickford road, is the McBride place. It is a small white house with a red barn in the rear and a neat rail fence enclosing the whole. Six years ago Cora McBride was bookkeeper in the local garage. Her maiden name was Allen. The town called her "Tomboy Allen." She was the only daughter of old Zeb Allen, for many years our county game-warden. Cora, as we had always known — and called — her, was a full-blown, red-blooded, athletic girl who often drove cars for her employer in the days when steering-wheels manipulated by women were offered as clinching proof that society was headed for the dogs.

Duncan McBride was chief mechanic in the garage repair shop. He was an affable, sober, steady chap, popularly known as "Dunk the Dauntless" because of an uncanny ability to cope successfully with the ailments of 90 per cent of the internal-combustion hay-balers and refractory tin-Lizzies in the county when other mechanics had given them up in disgust.

When he married his employer's bookkeeper, Cora's folks gave her a wedding that carried old Zeb within half an hour of insolvency and ran to four columns in the local daily. Duncan and the Allen girl motored to Washington in a demonstration-car, and while Dunk was absent the yard of the garage resembled the premises about a

junkshop. On their return they bought the Johnson place, and Cora quickly demonstrated the same furious enthusiasm for homemaking and motherhood that she had for athletics and carburetors.

Three years passed, and two small boys crept about the yard behind the white rail fence. Then — when Duncan and his wife were "making a great go of matrimony" in typical Yankee fashion — came the tragedy that took all the vim out of Cora, stole the ruddy glow from her girlish features, and made her middle-aged in a twelvemonth. In the infantile-paralysis epidemic which passed over New England three years ago the McBrides suffered the supreme sorrow — twice. Those small boys died within two weeks of each other.

Duncan, of course, kept on with his work at the garage. He was quieter and steadier than ever. But when we drove into the place to have a carburetor adjusted or a rattle tightened, we saw only too plainly that on his heart was a wound the scars of which would never heal. As for Cora, she was rarely seen in the village.

Troubles rarely come singly. One afternoon this past August, Duncan completed repairs on Doc Potter's runabout. Cranking the machine to run it from the workshop, the "dog" on the safety-clutch failed to hold. The acceleration of the engine threw the machine into high. Dunk was pinned in front while the roadster leaped ahead and rammed the delivery truck of the Red Front Grocery.

Duncan was taken to our memorial hospital with internal injuries and dislocation of his spine. He remained there many weeks. In fact, he had been home only a couple of days when the evening stage left in the McBrides' letterbox the daily paper containing the story of Ruggam's "break" and of the reward offered for his capture.

Cora returned to the kitchen after obtaining the paper and sank wearily into a wooden chair beside the table with the red cloth. Spreading out the paper, she sought the

usual mental distraction in the three-and-four-line bits which make up our local columns.

As the headlines caught her eye, she picked up the paper and entered the bedroom where Duncan lay. There were telltale traces of tears on his unshaven face, and an ache in his discouraged heart that would not be assuaged; for it was becoming rumored about the village that Dunk the Dauntless might never operate on the vitals of an ailing tin-Lizzie again.

"Dunnie," cried his wife, "Hap Ruggam's escaped!" Sinking down beside the bedroom lamp, she read him the article aloud.

Her husband's name was mentioned therein; for when the sheriff had commandeered an automobile from the local garage to convey him and his posse to Lost Nation and secure Ruggam, Duncan had been called forth to preside at the steering-wheel. He had thus assisted in the capture and later had been a witness at the trial.

The reading ended, the man rolled his head.

"If I wasn't held here, I might go!" he said. "I might try for that five thousand myself!"

Cora was sympathetic enough, of course, but she was fast approaching the stage where she needed sympathy herself.

"We caught him over on the Purcell farm," mused Duncan. "Something ailed Ruggam. He was drunk and couldn't run. But that wasn't all. He had had some kind of crazy-spell during or after the killing and wasn't quite over it. We tied him and lifted him into the auto. His face was a sight. His eyes aren't mates, anyhow, and they were wild and unnatural. He kept shrieking, something about a head of hair — black hair — sticks up like wire. He must have had an awful impression of Mart's face and that hair of his."

"I remember about Aunt Mary Crumpett's telling me of the trouble her husband had with his prisoner in the days before the trial," his wife replied. "He had those

crazy-spells often, nights. He kept yelling that he saw Martin Wiley's head with its peculiar hair, and his face peering in at him through the cell window. Sometimes he became so bad that Sheriff Crumpett thought he'd have apoplexy. Finally he had to call Dr. Johnson to attend him."

"Five thousand dollars!" muttered Duncan. "Gawd! I'd hunt the devil *for nothing* if I only had a chance of getting out of this bed."

Cora smoothed her husband's rumpled bed, comforted him, and laid her own tired head down beside his hand. When he had dozed off, she arose and left the room.

In the kitchen she resumed her former place beside the table with the cheap red cloth; and there, with her face in her hands, she stared into endless distance.

"Five thousand dollars! Five thousand dollars!" Over and over she whispered the words, with no one to hear.

The green-birch fire snapped merrily in the range. The draft sang in the flue. Outside, a soft, feathery snow was falling, for winter came early in the uplands of Vermont this past year. To Cora McBride, however, the winter meant only hardship. Within another week she must go into town and secure work. Not that she minded the labor nor the trips through the vicious weather! The anguish was leaving Duncan through those monotonous days before he should be up and around. Those dreary winter days! What might they not do to him — alone.

Five thousand dollars! Like many others in the valley that night she pictured with fluttering heart what it would mean to possess such a sum of money; but not once in her pitiful flight of fancy did she disregard the task which must be performed to gain that wealth.

It meant traveling upward in the great snowbound reaches of Vermont mountain-country and tracking down a murderer who had killed a second time to gain his freedom and would stop at nothing again.

And yet — *five thousand dollars!*

How much will a person do, how far will a normal human being travel, to earn five thousand dollars — if the need is sufficiently provocative?

As Cora McBride sat there in the homely little farmhouse kitchen and thought of the debts still existent, contracted to save the already stricken lives of two little lads forgotten now by all but herself and Duncan and God, of the chances of losing their home if Duncan could work no more and pay up the balance of their mortgage, of the days when Duncan must lie in the south bedroom alone and count the figures on the wall-paper — as she sat there and contemplated these things, into Cora McBride's heart crept determination.

At first it was only a faint challenge to her courage. As the minutes passed, however, her imagination ran riot, with five thousand dollars to help them in their predicament. The challenge grew. Multitudes of women down all the years had attempted wilder ventures for those who were dear to them. Legion in number had been those who had set their hands and hearts to greater tasks, made more improbable sacrifices, taken greater chances. Multitudes of them, too, had won — on little else than the courage of ignorance and the strength of desperation.

She had no fear of the great outdoors, for she had lived close to the mountains from childhood and much of her old physical resiliency and youthful daredeviltry remained. And the need was terrible, no one anywhere in the valley, not even her own people, knew how terrible.

Cora McBride, alone by her table in the kitchen, that night made her decision.

She took the kitchen lamp and went upstairs. Lifting the top of a leather trunk, she found her husband's revolver. With it was a belt and holster, the former filled with cartridges. In the storeroom over the back kitchen she unhooked Duncan's mackinaw and found her own toboggan-cap. From a corner behind some fishing-rods she salvaged a pair of summer-dried snowshoes; they had facilitated

many a previous hike in the winter woods with her man of a thousand adventures. She searched until she found the old army-haversack Duncan used as a game-bag. Its shoulder-straps were broken, but a length of rope sufficed to bind it about her shoulders, after she had filled it with provisions.

With this equipment she returned below-stairs. She drew on heavy woolen stockings and buckled on arctics. She entered the cold pantry and packed the knapsack with what supplies she could find at the hour. She did not forget a drinking-cup, a hunting-knife or matches. In her blouse she slipped a household flash-lamp.

Dressed finally for the adventure, from the kitchen she called softly to her husband. He did not answer. She was overwhelmed by a desire to go into the south bedroom and kiss him, so much might happen before she saw him again. But she restrained herself. She must not waken him.

She blew out the kerosene lamp, gave a last glance about her familiar kitchen and went out through the shed door, closing it softly behind her.

It was one of those close, quiet nights when the bark of a distant dog or whinny of a horse sounds very near at hand. The snow was falling feathery.

An hour later found her far to the eastward, following an old side road that led up to the Harrison lumber-job. She had meantime paid Dave Sheldon, a neighbor's boy, encountered by his gate, to stay with Duncan during her absence, which she explained with a white lie. But her conscience did not bother. Her conscience might be called upon to smother much more before the adventure was ended.

Off in the depths of the snowing night she strode along, a weird figure against the eerie whiteness that illumined the winter world. She felt a strange wild thrill in the infinite out-of-doors. The woodsman's blood of her father was having its little hour.

And she knew the woods. Intuitively she felt that if Ruggam was on Haystack Mountain making his way toward Lost Nation, he would strike for the shacks of the Green Mountain Club or the deserted logging-camps along the trail, secreting himself in them during his pauses for rest, for he had no food, and provisions were often left in these structures by hunters and mountain hikers. Her plan was simple. She would investigate each group of buildings. She had the advantage of starting on the northwest side of Haystack. She would be working toward Ruggam, while the rest of the posses were trailing him.

Mile after mile she covered. She decided it must be midnight when she reached the ghostly buildings of the Harrison tract, lying white and silent under the thickening snow. It was useless to search these cabins, they were too near civilization. Besides, if Ruggam had left the freight at Norwall on the eastern side of Haystack at noon, he had thirty miles to travel before reaching the territory from which she was starting. So she skirted the abandoned quiet of the clearing, laid the snowshoes properly down before her and bound the thongs securely about her ankles.

She had plenty of time to think of Ruggam as she padded along. He had no snowshoes to aid him, unless he had managed to secure a pair by burglary, which was improbable. So it was not difficult to calculate about where she should begin watching for him. She believed he would keep just off the main trail to avoid detection, yet take its general direction in order to secure shelter and possible food from the mountain buildings. When she reached the country in which she might hope to encounter him, she would zigzag across that main trail in order to pick up his foot-tracks if he had passed her undetected. In that event she would turn and follow. She knew that the snow was falling too heavily to continue in such volume indefinitely; it would stop as suddenly as it had started.

The hours of the night piled up. The silent, muffling

snowfall continued. And Cora McBride began to sense an alarming weariness. It finally dawned upon her that her old-time vigor was missing. The strength of youth was hers no longer. Two experiences of motherhood and no more exercise than was afforded by the tasks of her household, had softened her muscles. Their limitations were now disclosed.

The realization of those limitations was accompanied by panic. She was still many miles even from Blind Brook Cabin, and her limbs were afire from the unaccustomed effort. This would never do. After pauses for breath that were coming closer and closer together, she set her lips each time grimly. "Tomboy Allen" had not counted on succumbing to physical fatigue before she had climbed as far as Blind Brook. If she were weakening already, what of those many miles on the other side?

Tuesday the 28th of October passed with no tidings of Ruggam's capture. The Holmes boy was fatally shot by a rattleheaded searcher near Five-Mile Pond, and distraught parents began to take thought of their own lads missing from school. Adam MacQuarry broke his leg near the Hell Hollow schoolhouse and was sent back by friends on a borrowed bobsled. Several ne'er-do-wells, long on impulse and short on stickability, drifted back to more comfortable quarters during the day, contending that if Hap were captured, the officers would claim the reward anyhow — so what was the use bucking the System?

The snowfall stopped in the early morning. Sunrise disclosed the world trimmed from horizon to horizon in fairy fluff. Householders jocosely shoveled their walks; small children resurrected attic sleds; here and there a farmer appeared on Main Street during the forenoon in a pung-sleigh or cutter with jingling bells. The sun soared higher, and the day grew warmer. Eaves began dripping during the noon hour, to stop when the sun sank about four o'clock behind Bancroft's hill.

After the sunset came a perfect evening. The starlight

was magic. Many people called in at the newspaper-office after the movies, to learn if the man hunt had brought results.

Between ten and eleven o'clock the lights on the valley floor blinked out; the town had gone to bed — that is, the lights blinked out in all homes excepting those on the eastern outskirts, where nervous people worried over the possibilities of a hungry, hunted convict burglarizing their premises, or drawn-faced mothers lived mentally through a score of calamities befalling red-blooded sons who had now been absent twenty-four hours.

Sometime between nine o'clock and midnight — she had no way of telling accurately — Cora McBride stumbled into the Lyons clearing. No one would have recognized in the staggering, bedraggled apparition that emerged from the silhouette of the timber the figure that had started so confidently from the Harrison tract the previous evening.

For over an hour she had hobbled blindly. It was wholly by accident that she had stumbled into the clearing. And the capture of Ruggam had diminished in importance. Warm food, water that would not tear her raw throat, a place to lie and recoup her strength after the chilling winter night — these were the only things that counted now. Though she knew it not, in her eyes burned the faint light of fever. When a snag caught her snowshoe and tripped her, there was hysteria in her cry of resentment.

As she moved across from the timber-line, her hair was revealed fallen down; she had lost a glove, and one hand and wrist were cruelly red where she had plunged them several times into the snow to save herself from falling upon her face. She made but a few yards before the icy thong of her right snowshoe snapped. She did not bother to repair it. Carrying it beneath her arm, she hobbled brokenly toward the shelter of the buildings.

Her failure at the other cabins, the lack, thus far, of all

signs of the fugitive, the vastness of the hunting-ground magnified by the loneliness of winter, had convinced her finally that her quest was futile. It was all a venture of madness. The idea that a woman, alone and single-handed, with no weapon but a revolver, could track down and subdue a desperate murderer in winter mountains where hardly a wild thing stirred, and make him return with her to the certain penalty — this proved how much mental mischief had again been caused by the lure of money. The glittering seduction of gold had deranged her. She realized it now, her mind normal in an exhausted body. So she gained the walls of the building and stumbled around them, thoughtless of any possible signs of the fugitive.

The stars were out in myriads. The Milky Way was a spectacle to recall vividly the sentiment of the Nineteenth Psalm. The log buildings of the clearing, every tree-trunk and bough in the woods beyond, the distant skyline of stump and hollow, all stood out sharply against the peculiar radiance of the snow. The night was as still as the spaces between the planets.

Like some wild creature of those winter woods the woman clumped and stumbled around the main shack, seeking the door.

Finding it, she stopped, the snowshoe slipped from beneath her arm; one numb hand groped for the long door-casing in support, the other fumbled for the revolver.

Tracks led into that cabin!

A paralysis of fright gripped Cora McBride. Something told her intuitively that she stood face to face at last with what she had traveled all this mountain wilderness to find. Yet with sinking heart it also came to her that if Hap Ruggam had made these tracks and were still within, she must face him in her exhausted condition or at once make that tortuous return trip to civilization. There would be no one to help her.

She realized in that moment that she was facing the

primal. And she was not primal. She was a normal woman, weakened to near-prostration by the trek of the past twenty-four hours. Was it not better to turn away while there was time?

She stood debating thus, the eternal silence blanketing forest-world and clearing. But she was allowed to make no decision.

A living body sprang suddenly upon her. Before she could cry out, she was borne down precipitously from behind.

She tried to turn the revolver against the Thing upon her, but the gun was twisted from her raw, red fingers. The snow into which she had been precipitated blinded her. She smeared an arm across her eyes, but before clear sight was regained, talon fingers had gripped her shoulders. She was half lifted, half dragged through the doorway, and there she was dropped on the plank flooring. Her assailant, turning, made to close and bar the door.

When she could see clearly, she perceived a weak illumination in the cabin. On the rough bench-table, shaded by two slabs of bark, burned the stub of a tallow candle probably left by some hunting-party.

The windows were curtained with rotting blankets. Some rough furniture lay about, rusted cooking-utensils littered the tables, and at one end was a sheet-iron stove. The place had been equipped after a fashion by deer-hunters or mountain hikers, who brought additional furnishings to the place each year and left mouldy provisions and unconsumed firewood behind.

The man succeeded finally in closing the door. He turned upon her.

He was short and stocky. The stolen corduroy coat covered blacksmith's muscles now made doubly powerful by dementia. His hair was lifeless black and clipped close, prison-fashion. His low forehead hung over burning mismated eyes. From her helplessness on the floor Cora McBride stared up at him.

He came closer.

"Get up!" he ordered. "Take that chair. And don't start no rough-house; whether you're a woman or not, I'll drill you!"

She groped to the indicated chair and raised herself, the single snowshoe still dragging from one foot. Again the man surveyed her. She saw his eyes and gave another inarticulate cry.

"Shut your mouth and keep it shut! You hear me?"

She obeyed.

The greenish light burned brighter in his mismated eyes, which gazed intently at the top of her head as though it held something unearthly.

"Take off your hat!" was his next command.

She pulled off the toque. Her hair fell in a mass on her snow-blotched shoulders. Her captor advanced upon her. He reached out and satisfied himself by touch that something was not there which he dreaded. In hypnotic fear she suffered that touch. It reassured him.

"Your hair now," he demanded, "it don't stand up, does it? No, o' course it don't. You ain't *him;* you're a woman. But if your hair comes up, I'll kill you — understand? If your hair comes up, *I'll kill you!*"

She understood. She understood only too well. She was not only housed with a murderer, she was housed with a maniac. She sensed, also, why he had come to this mountain shack so boldly. In his dementia he knew no better. And she was alone with him, unarmed now.

"I'll keep it down," she whispered, watching his face out of fear-distended eyes.

The wind blew one of the rotten blankets inward. Thereby she knew that the window-aperture on the south wall contained no sash. He must have removed it to provide means of escape in case he were attacked from the east door. He must have climbed out that window when she came around the shack, that is how he had felled her from behind.

He stepped backward now until he felt the edge of the bench touch his calves. Then he sank down, one arm stretched along the table's rim, the hand clutching the revolver.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I'm Cora McB——" She stopped — she recalled in a flash the part her husband had played in his former capture and trial. "I'm Cora Allen," she corrected. Then she waited, her wits in chaos. She was fighting desperately to bring order out of that chaos.

"What you doin' up here?"

"I started for Millington, over the mountain. I lost my way."

"Why didn't you go by the road?"

"It's further."

"That's a lie! It ain't. And don't lie to me, or I'll kill you!"

"Who are you?" she heard herself asking. "And why are you acting this way with me?"

The man leaned suddenly forward.

"You mean to tell me you don't know?"

"A lumberjack, maybe, who's lost his way like myself?"

His expression changed abruptly.

"What you luggin' *this* for?" He indicated the revolver.

"For protection."

"From what?"

"Wild things."

"There ain't no wild things in these mountains this time o' year, they're snowed up, and you know it."

"I just felt safer to have it along."

"To protect you from men-folks, maybe?"

"There are no men in these mountains I'm afraid of!" She made the declaration with pathetic bravado.

His eyes narrowed.

"I think I better kill you," he decided. "You've seen me; you'll tell you seen me. Why shouldn't I kill you? You'd only tell."

"Why? What have I done to you?" she managed to stammer. "Why should you object to being seen?"

It was an unfortunate demand. He sprang up with a snarl. Pointing the revolver from his hip, he drew back the hammer.

"*Don't!*" she shrieked. "Are you crazy? Don't you know how to treat a woman — in distress?"

"Distress, *hell!* You know who I be. And I don't care whether you're a woman or not, I ain't goin' to be took — you understand?"

"Certainly I understand."

She said it in such a way that he eased the hammer back into place and lowered the gun. For the moment again she was safe. In response to her terrible need, some of her latent Yankee courage came now to aid her. "I don't see what you're making all this rumpus about," she told him in as indifferent a voice as she could command. "I don't see why you should want to kill a friend who might help you — if you're really in need of help."

"I want to get to Partridgeville," he muttered after a moment.

"You're not far from there. How long have you been on the road?"

"None of your business."

"Have you had any food?"

"No."

"If you'll put up that gun and let me get off this snowshoe and pack, I'll share with you some of the food I have."

"Never you mind what I do with this gun. Go ahead and fix your foot, and let's see what you got for grub." The man resumed his seat.

She twisted up her tangled hair, replaced her toque and untied the dangling snowshoe.

Outside a tree cracked in the frost. He started in hair-trigger fright. Creeping to the window, he peeped cautiously between casing and blanket. Convinced that it was nothing, he returned to his seat by the table.

"It's too bad we couldn't have a fire," suggested the woman then. "I'd make us something hot." The stove was there, rusted but still serviceable; available wood was scattered around. But the man shook his bullet head.

After a trying time unfastening the frosted knots of the ropes that had bound the knapsack upon her back, she emptied it on to the table. She kept her eye, however, on the gun. He had disposed of it by thrusting it into his belt. Plainly she would never recover it without a struggle. And she was in no condition for physical conflict.

"You're welcome to anything I have," she told him.

"Little you got to say about it! If you hadn't given it up, I'd took it away from you. So what's the difference?"

She shrugged her shoulders. She started around behind him, but he sprang toward her.

"Don't try no monkey-shines with me!" he snarled. "You stay here in front where I can see you."

She obeyed, watching him make what poor meal he could from the contents of her bag.

She tried to reason out what the dénouement of the situation was to be. He would not send her away peacefully, for she knew he dared not risk the story she would tell regardless of any promises of secrecy she might give him. If he left her bound in the cabin, she would freeze before help came — if it ever arrived.

No, either they were going to leave the place and journey forth together — the Lord only knew where or with what outcome — or the life of one of them was to end in this tragic place within the coming few minutes. For she realized she must use that gun with deadly effect if it were to come again into her possession.

The silence was broken only by the noise of his lips as he ate ravenously. Outside, not a thing stirred in that snowbound world. Not a sound of civilization reached them. They were a man and woman in the primal, in civilization, and yet a million miles from it.

"The candle's going out," she announced. "Is there another?"

"There'll be light enough for what I got to do," he growled.

Despite her effort to appear indifferent, her great fear showed plainly in her eyes.

"Are we going to stay here all night?" she asked with a pathetic attempt at lightness.

"That's my business."

"Don't you want me to help you?"

"You've helped me all you can with the gun and food."

"If you're going to Partridgeville, I'd go along and show you the way."

He leaped up.

"*Now I know you been lyin'!*" he bellowed. "You said you was headed for Millington. And you ain't at all. You're watchin' your chance to get the drop on me and have me took — that's what you're doin'!"

"Wait!" she pleaded desperately. "I *was* going to Millington. But I'd turn back and show you the way to Partridgeville to help you."

"What's it to you?" He had drawn the gun from his belt and now was fingering it nervously.

"You're lost up here in the mountains, aren't you?" she said. "I couldn't let you stay lost if it was possible for me to direct you on your way."

"You said you was lost yourself."

"I was lost — until I stumbled into this clearing. That gave me my location."

"Smart, ain't you? Damn smart, but not too smart for me, you woman!" The flare flamed up again in his crooked eyes. "You know who I be, all right. You know what I'm aimin' to do. And you're stallin' for time till you can put one over. But you can't — see? I'll have this business done with. I'll end this business!"

She felt herself sinking to her knees. He advanced and gripped her left wrist. The crunch of his iron fingers sent

an arrow of pain through her arm. It bore her down.

"For God's sake — *don't!*" she whispered hoarsely, overwhelmed with horror. For the cold sharp nose of the revolver suddenly punched her neck.

"I ain't leavin' no traces behind. Might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. Never mind if I do ——"

"Look!" she cried wildly. "Look, look, *look!*" And with her free hand she pointed behind him.

It was an old trick. There was nothing behind him. But in that instant of desperation instinct had guided her.

Involuntarily he turned.

With a scream of pain she twisted from his grasp and blotted out the candle.

A long, livid pencil of orange flame spurted from the gunpoint. She sensed the powder-flare in her face. He had missed.

She scrambled for shelter beneath the table. The cabin was now in inky blackness. Across that black four more threads of scarlet light were laced. The man stumbled about, seeking her, cursing with blood-curdling blasphemy.

Suddenly he tripped and went sprawling. The gun clattered from his bruised fingers; it struck the woman's knee.

Swiftly her hand closed upon it. The hot barrel burned her palm.

She was on her feet in an instant. Her left hand fumbled in her blouse, and she found what had been there all along — the flash-lamp.

With her back against the door, she pulled it forth. With the gun thrust forward for action she pressed the button.

"I've got the gun — *get up!*" she ordered. "Don't come too near me or I'll shoot. Back up against that wall."

The bull's-eye of radiance blinded him. When his eyes became accustomed to the light, he saw its reflection on the barrel of the revolver. He obeyed.

"Put up your hands. Put 'em up *high!*"

"Suppose I won't?"

"I'll kill you."

"What'll you gain by that?"

"Five thousand dollars."

"Then you know who I be?"

"Yes."

"And was aimin' to take me in?"

"Yes."

"How you goin' to do that if I won't go?"

"You're going to find out."

"You won't get no money shootin' me."

"Yes, I will — just as much — dead as alive."

With his hands raised a little way above the level of his shoulders, he stood rigidly at bay in the circle of light.

"Well," he croaked at last, "go ahead and shoot. I ain't aimin' to be took — not by no woman. Shoot, damn you, and have it done with. I'm waitin'!"

"Keep up those hands!"

"I won't!" He lowered them defiantly. "I w-wanted to m-make Partridgeville and see the old lady. She'd 'a' helped me. But anything's better'n goin' back to that hell where I been the last two years. Go on! Why don't you shoot?"

"You wanted to make Partridgeville and see — *who?*"

"My mother — and my wife."

"Have you got a mother? Have you got a — wife?"

"Yes, and three kids. Why don't you shoot?"

It seemed an eon that they stood so. The McBride woman was trying to find the nerve to fire. She could not. In that instant she made a discovery that many luckless souls make too late: *to kill a man* is easy to talk about, easy to write about. But to stand deliberately face to face with a fellow-human — alive, pulsing, breathing, fearing, hoping, loving, living — point a weapon at him that would take his life, blot him from the earth, negate twenty or thirty years of childhood, youth, ma-

turity, and make of him in an instant — nothing! — that is quite another matter.

He was helpless before her now. Perhaps the expression on his face had something to do with the sudden revulsion that halted her finger. Facing certain death, some of the evil in those crooked eyes seemed to die out, and the terrible personality of the man to fade. Regardless of her danger, regardless of what he would have done to her if luck had not turned the tables, Cora McBride saw before her only a lone man with all society's hand against him, realizing he had played a bad game to the limit and lost, two big tears creeping down his unshaved face, waiting for the end.

"Three children!" she whispered faintly.

"Yes."

"You're going back to see them?"

"Yes, and my mother. Mother'd help me get to Canada — somehow."

Cora McBride had forgotten all about the five thousand dollars. She was stunned by the announcement that this man had relatives — a mother, a wife, *three* babies. The human factor had not before occurred to her. Murderers! They have no license to let their eyes well with tears, to have wives and babies, to possess mothers who will help them get to Canada regardless of what their earthly indiscretions may have been.

At this revelation the gun-point wavered. The sight of those tears on his face sapped her will-power even as a wound in her breast might have drained her life-blood.

Her great moment had been given her. She was letting it slip away. She had her reward in her hand for the mere pulling of a trigger and no incrimination for the result. For a bit of human sentiment she was bungling the situation unpardonably, fatally.

Why did she not shoot? Because she was a woman. Because it is the God-given purpose of womanhood to give life, not take it.

The gun sank, sank — down out of the light, down out of sight.

And the next instant he was upon her.

The flash-lamp was knocked from her hand and blinked out. It struck the stove and she heard the tinkle of the broken lens. The woman's hand caught at the sacking before the window at her left shoulder. Gripping it wildly to save herself from that onslaught, she tore it away. For the second time the revolver was twisted from her raw fingers.

The man reared upward, over her.

"Where are you?" he roared again and again. "I'll show you! Lemme at you!"

Outside the great yellow moon of early winter, arising late, was coming up over the silhouetted line of purple mountains to the eastward. It illumined the cabin with a faint radiance, disclosing the woman crouching beneath the table.

The man saw her, pointed his weapon pointblank at her face and fired.

To Cora McBride, prostrate there in her terror, the impact of the bullet felt like the blow of a stick upon her cheek-bone rocking her head. Her cheek felt warmly numb. She pressed a quick hand involuntarily against it, and drew it away sticky with blood.

Click! Click! Click!

Three times the revolver mechanism was worked to accomplish her destruction. But there was no further report. The cylinder was empty.

"Oh, God!" the woman moaned. "I fed you and offered to help you. I refused to shoot you because of your mother — your wife — your babies. And yet you ——"

"Where's your cartridges?" he cried wildly. "You got more; gimmé that belt!"

She felt his touch upon her. His crazy fingers tried to unbutton the clasp of the belt and holster. But he could secure neither while she fought him. He pinioned her at

length with his knee. His fingers secured a fistful of the cylinders from her girdle, and he opened the chamber of the revolver.

She realized the end was but a matter of moments. Nothing but a miracle could save her now.

Convulsively she groped about for something with which to strike. Nothing lay within reach of her bleeding fingers, however, but a little piece of dried sapling. She tried to struggle loose, but the lunatic held her mercilessly. He continued the mechanical loading of the revolver.

The semi-darkness of the hut, the outline of the moon afar through the uncurtained window — these swam before her. . . . Suddenly her eyes riveted on that curtainless window and she uttered a terrifying cry.

Ruggam turned.

Outlined in the window aperture against the low-hung moon *Martin Wiley, the murdered deputy, was staring into the cabin!*

From the fugitive's throat came a gurgle. Some of the cartridges he held spilled to the flooring. Above her his figure became rigid. There was no mistaking the identity of the apparition. They saw the man's hatless head and some of his neck. They saw his dark pompadour and the outline of his skull. As that horrible silhouette remained there, Wiley's pompadour lifted slightly as it had done in life.

The cry in the convict's throat broke forth into words.

"Mart Wiley!" he cried, "Mart Wiley! *Mart — Wiley!*"

Clear, sharp, distinct was the shape of that never-to-be-forgotten pompadour against the disk of the winter moon. His features could not be discerned, for the source of light was behind him, but the silhouette was sufficient. It was Martin Wiley; he was alive. His head and his wirelike hair were moving — rising, falling.

Ruggam, his eyes riveted upon the phantom, recoiled mechanically to the western wall. He finished loading the revolver by the sense of touch. Then:

Spurt after spurt of fire lanced the darkness, directed at the Thing in the window. While the air of the hut reeked with the acrid smoke, the echo of the volley sounded through the silent forest-world miles away.

But the silhouette in the window remained.

Once or twice it moved slightly as though in surprise; that was all. The pompadour rose in bellicose retaliation — the gesture that had always ensued when Wiley was angered or excited. But to bullets fired from an earthly gun the silhouette of the murdered deputy's ghost, arisen in these winter woods to prevent another slaughter, was impervious.

Ruggam saw; he shrieked. He broke the gun and spilled out the empty shells. He fumbled in more cartridges, locked the barrel and fired again and again, until once more it was empty.

Still the apparition remained.

The man in his dementia hurled the weapon; it struck the sash and caromed off, hitting the stove. Then Hap Ruggam collapsed upon the floor.

The woman sprang up. She found the rope thongs which had bound her pack to her shoulders. With steel-taut nerves, she rolled the insensible Ruggam over.

She tied his hands; she tied his ankles. With her last bit of rope she connected the two bindings tightly behind him so that if he recovered, he would be at her mercy. Her task accomplished, on her knees beside his prone figure, she thought to glance up at the window.

Wiley's ghost had disappeared.

Sheriff Crumpett and his party broke into the Lyons clearing within an hour. They had arrived in answer to five successive shots given a few moments apart, the signal agreed upon. The mystery to them, however, was that those five shots had been fired by some one not of their party.

The sheriff and his men found the McBride woman, her clothing half torn from her body, her features powder-

marked and blood-stained; but she was game to the last, woman-fashion weeping only now that all was over. They found, too, the man they had combed the country to find — struggling fruitlessly in his bonds, her prisoner.

And they likewise found the miracle.

On the snow outside under the window they came upon a black porcupine about the size of a man's head which, scenting food within the cabin, had climbed to the sill, and after the habit of these little animals whose number is legion all over the Green Mountains, had required fifteen bullets pumped into its carcass before it would release its hold.

Even in death its quills were raised in uncanny duplication of Mart Wiley's pompadour.

WILLIAM DUDLEY PELLEY

THESE extracts from a letter to the editor from Mr. Pelley are so full of suggestions and inspiration to the young student who wishes to write that they are used instead of a more formal biographical sketch. His letter was written in reply to a request for permission to reprint *The Face in the Window*.

"Autobiographical matter is rather embarrassing to give, especially in connection with a magazine story like *The Face in the Window*, which was written without any idea of the notoriety it was to receive ultimately.

"In view of the fact that I was able to receive only a Grammar-School education, I was somewhat fortunate in getting into newspaper work in my twenties which work in its essence is educational more or less, especially if one is to adopt a literary career. I started writing fiction in my newspaper office after hours, partly for economic reasons, until I found how difficult a future I confronted in the matter of attaining any widespread success. Then the work became a challenge to me, and I went at it to win, no matter how many months or years it might require. I wrote perhaps a dozen stories before making a sale to a very cheap magazine which paid me less than two cents a word — this after accumulating a hundred and seventy-five rejection slips! But by that time my aspirations toward liter-

ary success had been obliterated in the bellicosity required to lick the situation before it licked me. I rewrote my first story five times before it was finally accepted by the Street & Smith Publishing Company. That seemed to open the door, because almost immediately I had stories in *Adventure Magazine*, the Munsey publications, the *American*, and then straight into the *Saturday Evening Post*. After doing a series for the *Post* I went back to the *American* for two years, and then transferred to the *Red Book* and *Pictorial Review*. The war sent me to the Far East in Siberia, where I wrote my first novel which was published in 1919. In 1921 I wrote my second novel, *The Fog*, which has since gone into fourteen printings. After that I gave up newspaper work for good, moving to Hollywood to supervise the production of many of my stories on the screen. I have since divided my time between here and New York.

"I think the one thing which helped me most, and which I recommend most strongly to students of this vocation, was the purchase and minute study of the works of O. Henry. I read every one of his stories, which I know almost by heart now, analyzed them, observed how he got his effects and worked for his endings: then I tried to go him one better by using the same construction on what the trade knows as 'long short stories' — that is to say, stories running from eight to twelve thousand words. I put the same general construction into these narratives and retained the snapper ending for strength.

"For the information of those who believe that a literary career is all roses, let me say that even the most celebrated people in the business constantly have manuscript returned to them as not available, and I find that most of my contemporaries, no matter how high priced their work may be, still maintain that attitude of mind which receives each acceptance and payment for what they do with a bit of surprise that it registered at all.

"I like best to do my work at night, between ten o'clock in the evening and three in the morning, when there are no distractions or interruptions and I can concentrate unreservedly and get into the atmosphere of my story. I either dictate my material into an Ediphone or else write it in finished form directly on the typewriter. I have trained myself to say the thing I want to say in the way I want to say it the first time, without qualifications or re-editing. In other words, I write my story

in my mind before I sit down to put it on paper. If I cannot do this, I know the narrative is not sufficiently mellow for birth, if I may use such a metaphor. I might mention another very vital item which may interest beginners: no manuscript goes to any publisher if I can prevent it unless it looks like a piece of steel engraving, neatly bound in a printed cover, and showing as much care and preparation as I can expend upon it. I know from my editorial friends that this policy has paid me almost as much as the quality of my material."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Note how the author arouses our interest by beginning seemingly at the end of the story. What hints about the story do we get from Wiley's letter to the sheriff? Where does the author go back and begin his real story?
2. Picture the excitement in the newspaper office while the special dispatch is going to press. Why is the Higgins boy introduced, "saucer-eyed over being on the inside"? How does he serve the plot? How many times is Mart Wiley's pompadour mentioned? Why?
3. What do we first learn of Cora McBride? What traits of character, mentioned early in the story, convince us of the probability of her actions? What circumstances in her life make such action probable? Find the short paragraph in which the author definitely mentions both these points.
4. Show how the element of conflict enters into this story. Note that Cora McBride has a threefold struggle — with herself, with nature, with a maniac. (See Introduction, under "Plot.")
5. Write a conversation between two villagers in which they discuss Cora McBride's luck in winning the five thousand dollars. In your theme bring out her characteristics as the author has shown them, her love for her husband, her desperate need, her courage in undertaking such a quest.
6. Read *The Necklace*, by Guy de Maupassant. Read also what is said of that story in the introduction. Both *The Necklace* and *The Face in the Window* are primarily stories of plot. Show that this is true. In both, however, character is important to plot. Prove this also. Note

that in both stories a series of incidents or minor crises lead up to the climax. List these incidents in both stories.

Stories with the detective element:

The Luck Piece — Irvin S. Cobb
Willow Walk — Sinclair Lewis
The Sleuth of St. James Square — Melville Davisson Post
Gallegher — Richard Harding Davis
Five Thousand Dollars Reward — Melville Davisson Post
***The** Gold Bug* — Edgar Allan Poe

A FRIEND OF NAPOLEON

By RICHARD CONNELL

All Paris held no happier man than Papa Chibou. He loved his work — that was why. Other men might say — did say, in fact — that for no amount of money would they take his job; no, not for ten thousand francs for a single night. It would turn their hair white and give them permanent goose flesh, they averred. On such men Papa Chibou smiled with pity. What stomach had such zestless ones for adventure? What did they know of romance? Every night of his life Papa Chibou walked with adventure and held the hand of romance.

Every night he conversed intimately with Napoleon; with Marat and his fellow revolutionists; with Carpentier and Cæsar; with Victor Hugo and Lloyd George; with Foch and with Bigarre, the Apache murderer whose unfortunate penchant for making ladies into curry led him to the guillotine; with Louis XVI and with Madame Lablanche, who poisoned eleven husbands and was working to make it an even dozen when the police deterred her; with Marie Antoinette and with sundry early Christian martyrs who lived in sweet resignation in electric-lighted catacombs under the sidewalk of the Boulevard des Capucines in the very heart of Paris. They were all his friends and he had a word and a joke for each of them, as on his nightly rounds he washed their faces and dusted their ears, for Papa Chibou was night watchman at the Musée Pratoucy — "The World in Wax. Admission, one franc. Children and soldiers, half price. Nervous ladies

[1] From "Apes and Angels" by Richard Connell, published by Minton, Balch & Company. Reprinted by courtesy of the author and the publishers. The *Saturday Evening Post*, in whose pages this story was first printed, acquiesces in this release.

enter the Chamber of Horrors at their own risk. One is prayed not to touch the wax figures or to permit dogs to circulate in the establishment."

He had been at the Musée Pratoucy so long that he looked like a wax figure himself. Visitors not infrequently mistook him for one and poked him with inquisitive fingers or canes. He did not undeceive them; he did not budge; Spartanlike he stood stiff under the pokes; he was rather proud of being taken for a citizen of the world of wax, which was, indeed, a much more real world to him than the world of flesh and blood. He had cheeks like the small red wax pippins used in table decorations, round eyes, slightly poppy, and smooth white hair, like a wig. He was a diminutive man and, with his horseshoe moustache of surprising luxuriance, looked like a gnome going to a fancy-dress ball as a small walrus. Children who saw him flitting about the dim passages that led to the catacombs were sure he was a brownie.

His title "Papa" was a purely honorary one, given him because he had worked some twenty-five years at the museum. He was unwed, and slept at the museum in a niche of a room just off the Roman arena where papier-mâché lions and tigers breakfasted on assorted martyrs. At night, as he dusted off the lions and tigers, he rebuked them sternly for their lack of delicacy.

"Ah," he would say, cuffing the ear of the largest lion, which was earnestly trying to devour a grandfather and an infant simultaneously, "sort of a pig that you are! I am ashamed of you, eater of babies. You will go to hell for this, Monsieur Lion, you may depend upon it. Monsieur Satan will poach you like an egg, I promise you. Ah, you bad one, you species of a camel, you Apache, you profiteer ——"

Then Papa Chibou would bend over and very tenderly address the elderly martyr who was lying beneath the lion's paws and exhibiting signs of distress, and say, "Patience, my brave one. It does not take long to be

eaten, and then, consider: The good Lord will take you up to heaven, and there, if you wish, you yourself can eat a lion every day. You are a man of holiness, Phillibert. You will be Saint Phillibert, beyond doubt, and then won't you laugh at lions!"

Phillibert was the name Papa Chibou had given to the venerable martyr; he had bestowed names on all of them. Having consoled Phillibert, he would softly dust the fat wax infant whom the lion was in the act of bolting.

"Courage, my poor little Jacob," Papa Chibou would say. "It is not every baby that can be eaten by a lion; and in such a good cause too. Don't cry, little Jacob. And remember: When you get inside Monsieur Lion, kick and kick and kick! That will give him a great sickness of the stomach. Won't that be fun, little Jacob?"

So he went about his work, chattering with them all, for he was fond of them all, even of Bigarre the Apache and the other grisly inmates of the Chamber of Horrors. He did chide the criminals for their regrettable proclivities in the past and warn them that he would tolerate no such conduct in his museum. It was not his museum of course. Its owner was Monsieur Pratoucy, a long-necked, melancholy marabou of a man who sat at the ticket window and took in the francs. But, though the legal title to the place might be vested in Monsieur Pratoucy, at night Papa Chibou was the undisputed monarch of his little wax kingdom. When the last patron had left and the doors were closed Papa Chibou began to pay calls on his subjects; across the silent halls he called greetings to them:

"Ah, Bigarre, you old rascal, how goes the world? And you, Madame Marie Antoinette; did you enjoy a good day? Good evening, Monsieur Cæsar; aren't you chilly in that costume of yours? Ah, Monsieur Charlemagne, I trust your health continues to be of the best."

His closest friend of them all was Napoleon. The others he liked; to Napoleon he was devoted. It was a friendship cemented by the years, for Napoleon had been in the

museum as long as Papa Chibou. Other figures might come and go at the behest of a fickle public, but Napoleon held his place, albeit he had been relegated to a dim corner.

He was not much of a Napoleon. He was smaller even than the original Napoleon, and one of his ears had come in contact with a steam radiator and as a result it was gnarled into a lump the size of a hickory nut; it was a perfect example of that phenomenon of the prize ring, the cauliflower ear. He was supposed to be at St. Helena and he stood on a papier-mâché rock, gazing out wistfully over a nonexistent sea. One hand was thrust into the bosom of his long-tailed coat, the other hung at his side. Skin-tight breeches, once white but white no longer, fitted snugly over his plump bump of waxen abdomen. A Napoleonic hat, frayed by years of conscientious brushing by Papa Chibou, was perched above a pensive waxen brow.

Papa Chibou had been attracted to Napoleon from the first. There had been something so forlorn about him. Papa Chibou had been forlorn, too, in his first days at the museum. He had come from Bouloire, in the south of France, to seek his fortune as a grower of asparagus in Paris. He was a simple man of scant schooling and he fancied that there were asparagus beds along the Paris boulevards. There were none. So necessity and chance brought him to the Museum Pratoucy to earn his bread and wine, and romance and his friendship for Napoleon kept him there.

The first day Papa Chibou worked at the museum Monsieur Pratoucy took him round to tell him about the figures.

"This," said the proprietor, "is Toulon, the strangler. This is Mademoiselle Merle, who shot the Russian duke. This is Charlotte Corday, who stabbed Marat in the bathtub; that gory gentleman is Marat." Then they had come to Napoleon. Monsieur Pratoucy was passing him by.

"And who is this sad-looking gentleman?" asked Papa Chibou.

"Name of a name! Do you not know?"

"But no, monsieur."

"But that is Napoleon himself."

That night, his first in the museum, Papa Chibou went round and said to Napoleon, "Monsieur, I do not know with what crimes you are charged, but I, for one, refuse to think you are guilty of them."

So began their friendship. Thereafter he dusted Napoleon with especial care and made him his confidant. One night in his twenty-fifth year at the museum Papa Chibou said to Napoleon, "You observed those two lovers who were in here to-night, did you not, my good Napoleon? They thought it was too dark in this corner for us to see, didn't they? But we saw him take her hand and whisper to her. Did she blush? You were near enough to see. She is pretty, isn't she, with her bright dark eyes? She is not a French girl, she is an American; one can tell that by the way she doesn't roll her r's. The young man, he is French; and a fine young fellow he is, or I'm no judge. He is so slender and erect, and he has courage, for he wears the war cross; you noticed that, didn't you? He is very much in love, that is sure. This is not the first time I have seen them. They have met here before, and they are wise, for is this not a spot most romantic for the meetings of lovers?"

Papa Chibou flicked a speck of dust from Napoleon's good ear.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "it must be a thing most delicious to be young and in love! Were you ever in love, Napoleon? No? Ah, what a pity! I know, for I, too, have had not luck in love. Ladies prefer the big, strong men, don't they? Well, we must help these two young people, Napoleon. We must see that they have the joy we missed. So do not let them know you are watching them if they come here to-morrow night. I will pretend I do not see."

Each night after the museum had closed, Papa Chibou gossiped with Napoleon about the progress of the love affair between the American girl with the bright dark eyes and the slender, erect young Frenchman.

"All is not going well," Papa Chibou reported one night, shaking his head. "There are obstacles to their happiness. He has little money, for he is just beginning his career. I heard him tell her so to-night. And she has an aunt who has other plans for her. What a pity if fate should part them! But you know how unfair fate can be, don't you, Napoleon? If only we had some money we might be able to help him, but I myself have no money, and I suppose you too, were poor, since you look so sad. But attend; to-morrow is a day most important for them. He has asked her if she will marry him, and she has said that she will tell him to-morrow night at nine in this very place. I heard them arrange it all. If she does not come it will mean no. I think we shall see two very happy ones here to-morrow night, eh, Napoleon?"

The next night, when the last patron had gone and Papa Chibou had locked the outer door, he came to Napoleon, and tears were in his eyes.

"You saw, my friend?" broke out Papa Chibou. "You observed? You saw his face and how pale it grew? You saw his eyes and how they held a thousand agonies? He waited until I had to tell him three times that the museum was closing. I felt like an executioner, I assure you; and he looked up at me as only a man condemned can look. He went out with heavy feet; he was no longer erect. For she did not come. Our comedy of love has become a tragedy, monsieur. She has refused him, that poor, that unhappy young man."

On the following night at closing time Papa Chibou came hurrying to Napoleon; he was a-quiver with excitement.

"She was here!" he cried. "Did you see her? She was here and she kept watching and watching; but of course, he did not come. I could tell from his stricken face last

night that he had no hope. At last I dared to speak to her. I said to her, 'Mademoiselle, a thousand pardons for the very great liberty I am taking, but it is my duty to tell you — he was here last night and he waited until closing time. He was all of a paleness, mademoiselle, and he chewed his fingers in despair. He is devoted to you; and he is a fine young fellow, you can take an old man's word for it. He loves you, mademoiselle; a cow could see that. Do not break his heart, mademoiselle.' She grasped my sleeve. 'You know him, then?' she asked. 'You know where I can find him?' 'Alas, no,' I said. 'I have only seen him here with you.' 'Poor boy,' she kept saying. 'Poor boy! Oh, what shall I do? I am in dire trouble. I love him, monsieur.' 'But you did not come,' I said. 'I could not,' she replied, and she was weeping. 'I live with an aunt; a rich tiger she is, monsieur, and she wants me to marry a count, a fat leering fellow who smells of attar of roses and garlic. My aunt locked me in my room. And now I have lost the one I love, for he will think I have refused him, and he is so proud he will never ask me again.' 'But surely you could let him know?' I suggested. 'But I do not know where he lives,' she said. 'And in a few days my aunt is taking me off to Rome, where the count is, and oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear ——' And she wept on my shoulder. Napoleon, that poor little American girl with the bright dark eyes."

Papa Chibou began to brush the Napoleonic hat.

"I tried to comfort her," he said. "I told her that the young man would surely find her, that he would come back and haunt the spot where they had been happy, but I was telling her what I did not believe. 'He may come to-night,' I said, 'or to-morrow.' She waited until it was time to close the museum. You saw her face as she left; did it not touch you in the heart?"

Papa Chibou was downcast when he approached Napoleon the next night.

"She waited again till closing time," he said, "but he

did not come. It made me suffer to see her as the hours went by and her hope ebbed away. At last she had to leave, and at the door she said to me, 'if you see him here again, please give him this.' She handed me this card, Napoleon. See, it says, 'I am at the Villa Rosina, Rome. I love you. Nina.' Ah, the poor, poor young man. We must keep a sharp watch for him, you and I."

Papa Chibou and Napoleon did watch at the Musée Pratoucy night after night. One, two, three, four, five nights they watched for him. A week, a month, more months passed, and he did not come. There came instead one day news of so terrible a nature that it left Papa Chibou ill and trembling. The Musée Pratoucy was going to have to close its doors.

"It is no use," said Monsieur Pratoucy, when he dealt this blow to Papa Chibou. "I cannot go on. Already I owe much, and my creditors are clamouring. People will no longer pay a franc to see a few old dummies when they can see an army of red Indians, Arabs, brigands and dukes in the moving pictures. Monday the Musée Pratoucy closes its doors forever."

"But, Monsieur Pratoucy," exclaimed Papa Chibou, aghast, "what about the people here? What will become of Marie Antoinette, and the martyrs, and Napoleon?"

"Oh," said the proprietor, "I'll be able to realize a little on them, perhaps. On Tuesday they will be sold at auction. Someone may buy them to melt up."

"To melt up, monsieur?" Papa Chibou faltered.

"But certainly. What else are they good for?"

"But surely monsieur will want to keep them, a few of them anyhow?"

"Keep them? Aunt of the devil, but that is a droll idea! Why should anyone want to keep shabby old wax dummies?"

"I thought," murmured Papa Chibou, "that you might keep just one — Napoleon, for example — as a remembrance ——"

"Uncle of Satan, but you have odd notions! To keep a souvenir of one's bankruptcy!"

Papa Chibou went away to his little hole in the wall. He sat on his cot and fingered his moustache for an hour; the news had left him dizzy, had made a cold vacuum under his belt buckle. From under his cot, at last, he took a wooden box, unlocked three separate locks, and extracted a sock. From the sock he took his fortune, his hoard of big copper ten-centime pieces, tips he had saved for years. He counted them over five times most carefully; but no matter how he counted them he could not make the total come to more than two hundred and twenty-one francs.

That night he did not tell Napoleon the news. He did not tell any of them. Indeed he acted even more cheerful than usual as he went from one figure to another. He complimented Madame Lablanche, the lady of the poisoned spouses, on how well she was looking. He even had a kindly word to say to the lion that was eating the two martyrs.

"After all, Monsieur Lion," he said, "I suppose it is as proper for you to eat martyrs as it is for me to eat bananas. Probably bananas do not enjoy being eaten any more than martyrs do. In the past I have said harsh things to you, Monsieur Lion; I am sorry I said them, now. After all, it is hardly your fault that you eat people. You were born with an appetite for martyrs, just as I was born poor." And he gently tweaked the lion's papier-mâché ear.

When he came to Napoleon, Papa Chibou brushed him with unusual care and thoroughness. With a moistened cloth he polished the imperial nose, and he took pains to be gentle with the cauliflower ear. He told Napoleon the latest joke he had heard at the cabman's café where he ate his breakfast of onion soup, and, as the joke was mildly improper, nudged Napoleon in the ribs, and winked at him.

"We are men of the world, eh, old friend?" said Papa

Chibou. "We are philosophers, is that not so?" Then he added, "We take what life sends us, and sometimes it sends hardnesses."

He wanted to talk more with Napoleon, but somehow he couldn't; abruptly, in the midst of a joke, Papa Chibou broke off and hurried down into the depths of the Chamber of Horrors and stood there for a very long time staring at an unfortunate native of Siam being trodden on by an elephant.

It was not until the morning of the auction sale that Papa Chibou told Napoleon. Then, while the crowd was gathering, he slipped up to Napoleon in his corner and laid his hand on Napoleon's arm.

"One of the hardnesses of life has come to us, old friend," he said. "They are going to try to take you away. But, courage! Papa Chibou does not desert his friends. Listen!" And Papa Chibou patted his pocket, which gave forth a jingling sound.

The bidding began. Close to the auctioneer's desk stood a man, a wizened, rodent-eyed man with a diamond ring and dirty fingers. Papa Chibou's heart went down like an express elevator when he saw him, for he knew that the rodent-eyed man was Mogen, the junk king of Paris. The auctioneer in a voice slightly encumbered by adenoids, began to sell the various items in a hurried perfunctory manner.

"Item 3 is Julius Cæsar, toga and sandals thrown in. How much am I offered? One hundred and fifty francs? Dirt cheap for a Roman emperor, that is. Who'll make it two hundred? Thank you, Monsieur Mogen. The noblest Roman of them all is going at two hundred francs. Are you all through at two hundred? Going, going, gone! Julius Cæsar is sold to Monsieur Mogen."

Papa Chibou patted Cæsar's back sympathetically.

"You are worth more, my good Julius," he said in a whisper, "Good-bye."

He was encouraged. If a comparatively new Cæsar

brought only two hundred, surely an old Napoleon would bring no more.

The sale progressed rapidly. Monsieur Mogen bought the entire Chamber of Horrors. He bought Marie Antoinette, and the martyrs and the lions. Papa Chibou, standing near Napoleon, withstood the strain of waiting by chewing his moustache.

The sale was very nearly over and Monsieur Mogen had bought every item, when, with a yawn, the auctioneer droned; "Now ladies and gentlemen, we come to Item 573, a collection of odds and ends, mostly damaged goods, to be sold in one lot. The lot includes one stuffed owl that seems to have moulted a bit; one Spanish shawl, torn; the head of an Apache who has been guillotined, body missing; a small wax camel, no humps; and an old wax figure of Napoleon, with one ear damaged. What am I offered for the lot?"

Papa Chibou's heart stood still. He laid a reassuring hand on Napoleon's shoulder.

"The fool," he whispered in Napoleon's good ear, "to put you in the same class as a camel, no humps, and an owl. But never mind. It is lucky for us, perhaps."

"How much for this assortment?" asked the auctioneer.

"One hundred francs," said Mogen, the junk king.

"One hundred and fifty," said Papa Chibou, trying to be calm. He had never spent so vast a sum all at once in his life.

Mogen fingered the material in Napoleon's coat.

"Two hundred," said the junk king.

"Are you all through at two hundred?" queried the auctioneer.

"Two hundred and twenty-one," called Papa Chibou. His voice was a husky squeak.

Mogen from his rodent eyes glared at Papa Chibou with annoyance and contempt. He raised his dirtiest finger — the one with the diamond ring on it — toward the auctioneer.

"Monsieur Mogen bids two hundred and twenty-five," droned the auctioneer. "Do I hear two hundred and fifty?"

Papa Chibou hated the world. The auctioneer cast a look in his direction.

"Two hundred and twenty-five is bid," he repeated. "Are you all through at two hundred and twenty-five? Going, going — sold to Monsieur Mogen for two hundred and twenty-five francs."

Stunned, Papa Chibou heard Mogen say, casually, "I'll send round my carts for this stuff in the morning."

This stuff!

Dull and with an aching breast Papa Chibou went to his room down by the Roman arena. He packed his few clothes into a box. Last of all he slowly took from his cap the brass badge he had worn for so many years; it bore the words "Chief Watchman." He had been proud of that title, even if it was slightly inaccurate; he had been not only the chief but the only watchman. Now he was nothing. It was hours before he summoned up the energy to take his box round to the room he had rented high up under the roof of a tenement in a near-by alley. He knew he should start to look for another job at once, but he could not force himself to do so that day. Instead, he stole back to the deserted museum and sat down on a bench by the side of Napoleon. Silently he sat there all night; but he did not sleep; he was thinking, and the thought kept pecking at his brain and it was a shocking one. At last, as day began to edge its pale way through the dusty windows of the museum, Papa Chibou stood up with the air of a man who has been through a mental struggle and has made up his mind.

"Napoleon," he said, "we have been friends for a quarter of a century and now we are to be separated because a stranger had four francs more than I had. That may be lawful, my old friend, but it is not justice. You and I, we are not going to be parted."

Paris was not yet awake when Papa Chibou stole with infinite caution into the narrow street beside the museum. Along this street toward the tenement where he had taken a room crept Papa Chibou. Sometimes he had to pause for breath, for in his arms he was carrying Napoleon.

Two policemen came to arrest Papa Chibou that very afternoon. Mogen had missed Napoleon, and he was a shrewd man. There was not the slightest doubt of Papa Chibou's guilt. There stood Napoleon in the corner of his room, gazing pensively out over the housetops. The police bundled the overwhelmed and confused Papa Chibou into the police patrol, and with him, as damning evidence, Napoleon.

In his cell in the city prison Papa Chibou sat with his spirit caved in. To him jails and judges and justice were terrible and mysterious affairs. He wondered if he would be guillotined; perhaps not, since his long life had been one of blameless conduct; but the least he could expect, he reasoned, was a long sentence to hard labor on Devil's Island, and guillotining had certain advantages over that. Perhaps it would be better to be guillotined, he told himself, now that Napoleon was sure to be melted up.

The keeper who brought him his meal of stew was a pessimist of jocular tendencies.

"A pretty pickle," said the keeper; "and at your age too. You must be a very wicked old man to go about stealing dummies. What will be safe now? One may expect to find the Eiffel Tower missing any morning. Dummy stealing! What a career! We have had a man in here who stole a trolley car, and one who made off with the anchor of a steamship, and even one who pilfered a hippopotamus from a zoo, but never one who stole a dummy — and an old one-eared dummy, at that! It is an affair extraordinary!"

"And what did they do to the gentleman who stole the hippopotamus?" inquired Papa Chibou tremulously.

The keeper scratched his head to indicate thought.

"I think," he said, "that they boiled him alive. Either that or they transported him for life to Morocco; I don't recall exactly."

Papa Chibou's brow grew damp.

"It was a trial most comical, I can assure you," went on the keeper. "The judges were Messieurs Bertouf, Goblin, and Perouse — very amusing fellows, all three of them. They had fun with the prisoner; how I laughed. Judge Bertouf said, in sentencing him, 'We must be severe with you, Pilferer of hippopotamuses. We must make of you an example. This business of hippopotamus pilfering is getting all too common in Paris.' They are witty fellows, those judges."

Papa Chibou grew a shade paler.

"The Terrible Trio?" he asked.

"The Terrible Trio," replied the keeper cheerfully.

"Will they be my judges?" asked Papa Chibou.

"Most assuredly," promised the keeper, and strolled away humming happily and rattling his big keys.

Papa Chibou knew then that there was no hope for him. Even into the Musée Pratoucy the reputation of those three judges had penetrated, and it was a sinister reputation indeed. They were three ancient, grim men who had fairly earned their title, the "Terrible Trio," by the severity of their sentences; evildoers blanched at their names, and this was a matter of pride to them.

Shortly the keeper came back; he was grinning.

"You have the devil's own luck, old-timer," he said to Papa Chibou. "First you have to be tried by the Terrible Trio, and then you get assigned to you as lawyer none other than Monsieur Georges Dufayel."

"And this Monsieur Dufayel, is he then not a good lawyer?" questioned Papa Chibou miserably.

The keeper snickered.

"He has not won a case for months," he answered, as if it were the most amusing thing imaginable. "It is really better than a circus to hear him muddling up his clients'

affairs in court. His mind is not on the case at all. Heaven knows where it is. When he rises to plead before the judges he has no fire, no passion. He mumbles and stutters. It is a saying about the courts that one is as good as convicted who has the ill luck to draw Monsieur Georges Dufayel as his advocate. Still, if one is too poor to pay for a lawyer, one must take what he can get. That's philosophy, eh, old-timer?"

Papa Chibou groaned.

"Oh, wait till to-morrow," said the keeper gayly. "Then you'll have real reason to groan."

"But surely I can see this Monsieur Dufayel."

"Oh, what's the use? You stole the dummy, didn't you? It will be there in court to appear against you. How entertaining! Witness for the prosecution: Monsieur Napoleon. You are plainly as guilty as Cain, old-timer, and the judges will boil your cabbage for you very quickly and neatly, I can promise you that. Well, see you to-morrow. Sleep well."

Papa Chibou did not sleep well. He did not sleep at all, in fact, and when they marched him into the inclosure where sat the other nondescript offenders against the law he was shaken and utterly wretched. He was overawed by the great court room and the thick atmosphere of seriousness that hung over it.

He did pluck up enough courage to ask a guard, "Where is my lawyer, Monsieur Dufayel?"

"Oh, he's late, as usual," replied the guard. And then, for he was a waggish fellow, he added, "If you're lucky he won't come at all."

Papa Chibou sank down on the prisoners' bench and raised his eyes to the tribunal opposite. His very marrow was chilled by the sight of The Terrible Trio. The chief judge, Bertouf, was a vast man, who swelled out of his judicial chair like a poisonous fungus. His black robe was familiar with spilled brandy, and his dirty judicial bib was askew. His face was bibulous and brutal, and he had

the wattles of a turkey gobbler. Judge Goblin, on his right, looked to have mummified; he was at least a hundred years old and had wrinkled parchment skin and red-rimmed eyes that glittered like the eyes of a cobra. Judge Perouse was one vast jungle of tangled grizzled whisker, from the midst of which projected a cockatoo's beak of a nose; he looked at Papa Chibou and licked his lips with a long pink tongue. Papa Chibou all but fainted; he felt no bigger than a pea, and less important; as for his judges, they seemed enormous monsters.

The first case was called, a young swaggering fellow who had stolen an orange from a pushcart.

"Ah, Monsieur Thief," rumbled Judge Bertouf with a scowl, "you are jaunty now. Will you be so jaunty a year from to-day when you are released from prison? I rather think not. Next case."

Papa Chibou's heart pumped with difficulty. A year for an orange — and he had stolen a man! His eyes roved round the room and he saw two guards carrying in something which they stood before the judges. It was Napoleon.

A guard tapped Papa Chibou on the shoulder. "You're next," he said.

"But my lawyer, Monsieur ——" began Papa Chibou.

"You're in hard luck," said the guard, "for here he comes."

Papa Chibou in a daze found himself in the prisoner's dock. He saw coming toward him a pale young man. Papa Chibou recognized him at once. It was the slender, erect young man of the museum. He was not very erect now; he was listless. He did not recognize Papa Chibou; he barely glanced at him.

"You stole something," said the young lawyer, and his voice was toneless. "The stolen goods were found in your room. I think we might better plead guilty and get it over with."

"Yes, monsieur," said Papa Chibou, for he had let go

all his hold on hope. "But attend a moment. I have something — a message for you."

Papa Chibou fumbled through his pockets and at last found the card of the American girl with the bright dark eyes. He handed it to Georges Dufayel.

"She left it with me to give to you," said Papa Chibou. "I was chief watchman at the Musée Pratoucy, you know. She came there night after night, to wait for you."

The young man gripped the sides of the card with both hands; his face, his eyes, his everything about him seemed suddenly charged with new life.

"Ten thousand million devils!" he cried. "And I doubted her! I owe you much, monsieur. I owe you everything." He wrung Papa Chibou's hand.

Judge Bertouf gave an impatient judicial grunt.

"We are ready to hear your case, Advocate Dufayel," said the judge, "if you have one."

The court attendants sniggered.

"A little moment, monsieur the judge," said the lawyer. He turned to Papa Chibou. "Quick!" he shot out; "tell me about the crime you are charged with. What did you steal?"

"Him," replied Papa Chibou, pointing.

"That dummy of Napoleon?"

Papa Chibou nodded.

"But why?"

Papa Chibou shrugged his shoulders.

"Monsieur could not understand."

"But you must tell me!" said the lawyer urgently. "I must make a plea for you. These savages will be severe enough, in any event; but I may be able to do something. Quick, why did you steal this Napoleon?"

"I was his friend," said Papa Chibou. "The museum failed. They were going to sell Napoleon for junk, Monsieur Dufayel. He was my friend. I could not desert him."

The eyes of the young advocate had caught fire; they

were lit with a flash. He brought his fist down on the table.

"Enough," he cried.

Then he arose in his place and addressed the court. His voice was low, vibrant, and passionate; the judges, in spite of themselves, leaned forward to listen to him.

"May it please the honorable judges of this court of France," he began, "my client is guilty. Yes, I repeat in a voice of thunder, for all France to hear, for the enemies of France to hear, for the whole wide world to hear, he is guilty. He did steal this figure of Napoleon, the lawful property of another. I do not deny it. This old man, Jerome Chibou, is guilty, and I for one am proud of his guilt."

Judge Bertouf grunted.

"If your client is guilty, Advocate Dufayel," he said, "that settles it. Despite your pride in his guilt, which is a peculiar notion, I confess, I am going to sentence him to ——"

"But wait, your honor!" Dufayel's voice was compelling, "You must, you shall hear me! Before you pass sentence on this old man, let me ask you a question."

"Well?"

"Are you a Frenchman, Judge Bertouf?"

"But certainly."

"And you love France?"

"Monsieur has not the effrontery to suggest otherwise?"

"No. I was sure of it. That is why you will listen to me."

"I listen."

"I repeat then: Jerome Chibou is guilty. In the law's eyes he is a criminal. But in the eyes of France and those who love her his guilt is a glorious guilt, his guilt is more honorable than innocence itself."

The three judges looked at one another blankly; Papa Chibou regarded his lawyer with wide eyes; Georges Dufayel spoke on.

"These are times of turmoil and change in our country, messieurs the judges. Proud traditions which were once the birthright of every Frenchman have been allowed to decay. Enemies beset us within and without. Youth grows careless of that honor which is the soul of a nation. Youth forgets the priceless heritages of the ages, the great names that once brought glory to France in the past, when Frenchmen were Frenchmen. There are some in France who may have forgotten the respect due a nation's great" — here Advocate Dufayel looked very hard at the judges — "but there are a few patriots left who have not forgotten. And there sits one of them.

"This poor old man has deep within him a glowing devotion to France. You may say that he is a simple, unlettered peasant. You may say he is a thief. But I say, and true Frenchmen will say with me, that he is a patriot, messieurs the judges. He loves Napoleon. He loves him for what he did for France. He loves him because in Napoleon burns that spirit which has made France great. There was a time, messieurs the judges, when your fathers and mine dared to share that love for a great leader. Need I remind you of the career of Napoleon? I know I need not. Need I tell you of his victories? I know I need not."

Nevertheless, Advocate Dufayel did tell them of the career of Napoleon. With a wealth of detail and many gestures, he traced the rise of Napoleon; he lingered over his battles; for an hour and ten minutes he spoke eloquently of Napoleon and his part in the history of France.

"You may have forgotten," he concluded, "and others may have forgotten, but this old man sitting here, a prisoner — he did not forget. When mercenary scoundrels wanted to throw on the junk heap this effigy of one of France's greatest sons, who was it that saved him? Was it you, messieurs the judges? Was it I? Alas, no. It was a poor old man who loved Napoleon more than he loved himself. Consider, messieurs the judges; they were going

to throw on the junk heap — Napoleon, Napoleon — France's Napoleon — our Napoleon. Who would save him? Then uprose this man, this Jerome Chibou, whom you would brand as a thief, and he cried aloud for France and for the whole world to hear, 'Stop! Desecraters of Napoleon, stop! There still lives one Frenchman who loves the memories of his native land. There is still one patriot left. I, I, Jerome Chibou, will save Napoleon!' and he did save him, messieurs the judges."

Advocate Dufayel mopped his brow and levelling an accusing finger at the Terrible Trio, he said: "You may send Jerome Chibou to jail, but when you do, remember this: you are sending to jail the spirit of France. You may find Jerome Chibou guilty, but when you do, remember this: you are condemning a man for love of country, for love of France. Wherever true hearts beat in French bosoms, messieurs the judges, there will be the crime of Jerome Chibou, be it understood, and there will the name of Jerome Chibou be honored. Put him in prison, messieurs the judges, load his feeble old body with chains. And a nation will tear down the prison walls, break his chains, and pay homage to the man who loved Napoleon and France so much that he was willing to sacrifice himself on the altar of patriotism."

Advocate Dufayel sat down: Papa Chibou raised his eyes to the judges' bench. Judge Perouse was ostentatiously blowing his beak of a nose. Judge Goblin, who wore a Sedan ribbon in his button hole, was sniffling into his ink-well, and Chief Judge Bertouf was openly blubbering.

"Jerome Chibou, stand up." It was Chief Judge Bertouf, who spoke, and his voice was thick with emotion.

Papa Chibou, quaking, stood up. A hand like a hand of pink bananas was thrust down at him.

"Jerome Chibou," said Chief Judge Bertouf, "I find you guilty. Your crime is patriotism in the first degree. I sentence you to freedom. Let me have the honor of shaking the hand of a true Frenchman."

"And I," said Judge Goblin, thrusting out a hand as dry as autumn leaves.

"And I also," said Judge Perouse, reaching out a hairy hand.

"And furthermore," said Chief Judge Bertouf, "you shall continue to protect Napoleon you saved. I subscribe a hundred francs to buy him for you."

"And I," said Judge Goblin.

"And I also," said Judge Perouse.

As they left the court room Advocate Dufayel, Papa Chibou and Napoleon, Papa Chibou turned to his lawyer.

"I can never repay you, monsieur," he began.

"Nonsense!" said the lawyer.

"And would Monsieur Dufayel mind telling me again the last name of Napoleon?"

"Why, Bonaparte, of course. Surely you knew ——"

"Alas, no, monsieur Dufayel. I am a man the most ignorant. I did not know that my friend had done such great things."

"You didn't? Then what, in the name of Heaven, did you think Napoleon was?"

"A sort of murderer," said Papa Chibou humbly.

Out beyond the walls of Paris in a garden stands the villa of Georges Dufayel, who has become, every one says, the most eloquent and successful young lawyer in the Paris courts. He lives there with his wife, who has bright dark eyes. To get to his house, one must pass a tiny gate-house, where lives a small old man, with a prodigious walrus moustache. Visitors who peer into the gate-house as they pass, sometimes get a shock, for, standing in one corner of its only room, they see another small man in uniform and a big hat. He never moves, but stands there by the window all day, one hand in the bosom of his coat, the other at his side, while his eyes look out over the garden. He is waiting for Papa Chibou to come home after

his work among the asparagus beds to tell him the jokes and the news of the day.

RICHARD CONNELL

"My ears," writes Richard Connell, author of *A Friend of Napoleon*, "came in contact with printer's ink when I was still in kilts, for my father was editor of a daily newspaper in Poughkeepsie, New York, where I was born in 1893, and my favorite playground was the composing room. My father started me writing stories for his paper when I was in high school. As I was always interested in sports, I became sporting editor. Under my father's watchful blue-pencil, I learned something about the mechanics of writing. Before I went to college, I was city editor for a time. At Harvard, I gained more writing experience as editor of the *Lampoon*, the comic magazine, and editorial chairman of the *Crimson*, the University daily newspaper. After graduation, I went to New York and was a reporter on a newspaper there. Incidentally, when covering the sale of the famous old Eden Musée, I got the idea which I later developed into *A Friend of Napoleon*. I left newspaper work to write advertising, and while I was hymning the praises of rubber-heels, the United States went into the war, and I enlisted as a private. If all the soldiers had been as poor as I, we'd still be fighting. As I showed little promise as an infantryman, and less as a cavalryman, they made me editor of the 27th Division weekly magazine, called *The Gas Attack*, while we were in training camp. I went overseas with my regiment, and saw some active service. Returning, still a private, I did some more advertising work, got married, and then launched into fiction writing. I now try to produce about twenty stories a year. I am a great lover of France, particularly Paris, and my wife and I spend about a third of our time there. The rest of the time we live a semi-rural life in Green's Farms, Connecticut, and write when we are not swimming. My stories have been collected in three books, *The Sin of Monsieur Pettipon*, *Apes and Angels*, and *Variety*."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. How soon in the story do we learn the occupation of Papa Chibou? What was the Musée Pratoucy? What pic-

ture of the interior do we get, especially from the second paragraph?

2. What do we learn of Papa Chibou before his coming to the Musée? Where are we told this? Explain the sentence, "Every night of his life Papa Chibou walked with adventure and held the hand of romance"?
3. This story is rich in clever or humorous bits of description such as "Judge Bertouf was a vast puff of a man swelled out of his judicial chair like a poisonous fungus." Find other examples. Note also the author's complete familiarity with Paris and French idioms.
4. What natural mistake does M. Dufayel make in regard to Papa Chibou's affection for Napoleon? What emotion is really responsible for his eloquent speech in behalf of Papa Chibou? How do you like the ending of this story?
5. We last see the wax image of Napoleon standing in the gate-house near the window. Imagine what he is thinking about and write a theme on *The Reflections of Napoleon.* Possibly he sees in imagination his life at the Musée and lives again the romantic story in which he played a part. Another good theme subject would be *Midnight in the Musée Pratoucy.* Describe the scene and imagine that the wax figures come to life and converse. There is opportunity here for some clever writing.
6. Read *The Sire de Maletroit's Door,* by Robert Louis Stevenson, and compare it with this story. Both are romantic stories in setting as well as in plot. Show that this statement is true. Compare the two stories as to introduction, plot, and ending. Which story do you prefer? Why?

Stories of romance:

Monsieur Beaucaire — Booth Tarkington
Ghitza — Konrad Bercovici
The Token — Joseph Hergesheimer
The Wreck — Guy de Maupassant
The Dark City — Conrad Aiken
Champlin — Morgan Burke

WILD GEESE

By CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE

The cloud that at noon had passed like a slow-moving black swan over the desert town of Mesquite, by three o'clock had assumed the proportions of a huge drawn shade; ten minutes later it was raining, and in another ten minutes crystal-clear again with the heat sucking greedily at every drop which a capricious sky had let fall. But the scent of moisture on sagebrush and withered stubble released a pungence worthy of a far more generous baptism. It was as if the parched country, yearning mightily toward greater refreshment, had clapped its withered hands together in a sudden delirium of joy. A little shiver of delight ran through the poplars huddled near the water-tank and overhead a mounting meadow lark laughed out a brief rapture.

Jane Bradford, locking the door of the sun-bleached school-house, was too late to catch the thrill of rain upon her upturned face, but the lingering ecstasy of the spent shower had power to set her pulses leaping. If only, like the meadow lark, she could have given voice to her joy or, better still, wings to carry it up, up, and over the crest of the blunt scarred hills to freedom! . . . But she was still too young to be cheated of all demonstration and, facing about, she ran swiftly in the direction of home. Midway in her flight past the station she halted; what would the inhabitants of Mesquite think of their school-mistress? For a moment the question sobered her but the next instant she was on her way again, in full flight, the soft white folds of her skirt whipping the air with the grace of a bit of drapery from some Attic frieze.

She was breathless when she reached her door and glad of the shade of the cottonwoods which threw grave shadows across the threshold. When, upon the death of her

father, she had come in from Saltine Valley to Mesquite to take charge of the district school, it was these two cottonwoods that had decided her habitation: they seemed like sentinels standing guard over the gaunt, sun-bleached house they sheltered. Citizens of Mesquite had protested her choice: a lonely cottage detached from the ugly ripple of the town was no place for Jaspar Bradford's daughter. But she knew better: if her imagination read security into the presence of two tremulous cottonwoods, security was there. They let her have her way, with the gentle tolerance of the West, remembering that the Bradfords had always stood apart from them, especially the mother; assuredly, the mother never had taken root in her adopted country and Jane Bradford's whimsy concerning the trees was not surprising: Mrs. Bradford had been like that — full of quaint fancies.

To-day Jane Bradford found these two friendly trees more gracious than ever. The sun had not yet penetrated their green reticence and, as a breeze swept through them, the ground beneath sparkled with raindrops. It was as if they had hoarded this moisture for her special delight. In acknowledgment she lifted her face to their cool touch, drawing in deep breaths. Would her desert-bred soul ever quench the thirst that had been denied it? As if in mockery the same breeze which had shaken the trees free of their refreshment grew suddenly hot with the dry pungence of greasewood and stubble. No wonder her mother had withered under the desert's arid touch — a woman reared with the tang of sea-mists in her nostrils! And in the indignant heat of this reminiscence she pushed into the house.

Inside, the tragic memory of her mother still clung to her, reënforced by the two household gods that had made life tolerable for the exile. There upon the table lay the conch shell, brought by a great-uncle from some fortunate excursion to the West Indies; and on a narrow shelf, in a conspicuous place of honor, stood the model of the good

ship Ariel with an uncertain history that made any glory possible: talismans which under the spell of intense and bitter longing so often had brought the cool ripples of an imaginary sea splashing over the moistless sands of Saltine Valley.

The air of the low room was stifling. Jane Bradford opened all her windows and a truant gust circling the four walls caught the limp sails of the Ariel, transforming it into a thing of buoyant and incredible life. The illusion of swift flight was so intense and startling that Jane Bradford clapped her hands together in a gesture half pleasure and half fear; for the moment it seemed as if it might elude her, as if under the spell of some desert magic it would sail off and be swallowed up in a distant and faint mirage. But the next instant the sails were empty and the miniature ship again floundering in a tragic calm. Jane Bradford's hands dropped to her side; she felt that something eerie and mysterious had passed her, and in a rush of motionless wonder she stood transfixed until the dim realization that somebody was tapping discreetly at her door roused her.

The knock came again, this time with a vigor which seemed to proclaim that the intelligence behind it had definite and positive knowledge of her presence. She wavered a moment, resentful of an irrelevant visitor breaking in on a mood so fragile and precious. But, realizing that there was no escape, in the end she threw open the door. On her threshold stood a strange and very self-contained man with a pale face and a crop of burnished hair which frequently goes with such a complexion; a male, still on the borderland of youth, in a smart tweed suit and tan spats — a thing as alien and foreign to Mesquite as the midsummer shower which had just spent itself, or the conch shell upon her table, or the model of the good ship Ariel.

He looked up with a twinkling glance and he said with an air of absolute candor:

"I knew you were inside the house because I saw you running toward it, not five minutes ago. . . . Do all the inhabitants express themselves so gaily?"

She colored. "It was the rain," she explained simply.

"Rain!" he scoffed. "You don't call *that* rain!"

"It's as good as we can do," she returned defensively.

"I hate to disillusion you," he ventured, "but it was a very poor performance . . . an extremely poor performance; the rain, I mean. You, of course, were magnificent. It moves me to wonder just how you would react to a cloudburst."

She decided to meet his impertinence seriously. "I'm not sure, but I fancy I should die of joy," she answered, looking at him squarely.

He slipped easily from the traces of her gravity. "Well, we'll not order a cloudburst, then! At least not until we've come to some sort of terms. . . . You see, I go in for death only as a last resort — after every other persuasion has failed. . . . I suppose there's no doubt about your being the person I am looking for." He consulted a card. "Bradford — Miss Jane Bradford?"

He puzzled her into an acceptance of his banter. "No doubt that I know of," she threw back.

"And that you own a ship model?" She assented. "Well, I've come several thousand miles to see it."

He made this extraordinary statement in a tone as casual as if he had said, "I hear you have a room to let; may I look at it?"

She fell back a little, wondering if he were quite a safe person: madmen always had been one of her special terrors. But his auburn eyes glowed so mellowly that she decided to chance him. . . . He entered the room with the faintest suggestion of a swagger and she saw that he carried a walking-stick. A walking-stick in Mesquite! He *must* be mad!

She went over to lower the shades while he appraised her habitation with well-bred interest. She felt distinctly

annoyed. For, back of the almost casual estimate of her surroundings, she could sense a swift and unerring discernment. It wasn't fair for a stranger to attempt to discover *any one* so promptly.

But she forgave him once his eyes had fallen upon the model of the good ship Ariel. A sudden wishful light that just missed rapacity crept into his eyes; he leaned back on his cane with an air of weary skepticism. She crossed over and took the ship model in her hands. He caught his breath, as a hunter does who waits to see the effect of his rifle shot. Then, as she surrendered it to him, he released a long exquisite sigh of satisfaction.

For a moment he seemed content just to stand there in an attitude of intensive contemplation. It was her turn to hold *her* breath: she never had seen quite such calm rapture. . . . He moved finally and set the coveted treasure down upon the table where the sharp desert sunlight gilded it to a twofold glory. She fell discreetly back, watching him trace its buoyant outlines with a sensitive finger, almost as a blind man might have done.

Presently he turned and said to her:

"I've been ten months on the trail of this model. Tell me, how did you come by it?"

She sat down, motioning him to a seat opposite her. "It belonged originally to my grandfather, I believe."

He deserted his post with reluctance. "Ah, an heirloom, I see!"

She gave a pointed laugh. "Oh, much more than just an heirloom. It's my complete inheritance! That and a conch shell!"

He was on his feet in an instant, following the lure of her upraised finger. "A conch-shell. . . . How quaint! How absurdly quaint!" And with boyish eagerness he lifted the conch shell from its dusty place on the walnut writing-desk and listened to its imprisoned tempest. She smiled back at him as he laid the shell aside. He looked at her sharply. "The sea is a passion with you, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said faintly, turning away as if he had suddenly uncovered a weakness.

He resumed his seat. "Well," he began easily, "it's a passion with me, too. I come from Cornwall and it's in my blood. Matter of fact, I should have followed it but a lot of tiresome things interfered." He broke off and ran his lean white fingers through his red hair. His gesture was eloquent of defeat. "As it is, I can only play with the sea. So I run about the world collecting toys. It's great fun!"

"Toys!" She lifted puzzled eyebrows.

"Why, yes — don't you understand? Ship models — like the Ariel there — your Ariel."

She saw a sly crafty look creep into his eyes and felt the instinctive fear a mother feels in the presence of a stranger who casts covetous glances at her child. She rose deliberately and set the Ariel back in its place on the mantelpiece, saying as she did so:

"You can't fancy how fond I am of it. Nothing would induce me to part with it — *nothing!*"

She had expected him to be abashed by the vehemence of her outburst, but instead he nestled in his chair with an air of half-contentment and half-patience. It was plain that he was preparing for a long siege. "Naturally you're fond of it," he assented dreamily. "Who wouldn't be? Of course you know its history."

"No, and I'm not sure that I want to," she flung back, moved by an irrational fear that facts might rob her of right to its possession.

He opened his cigarette case and waited for her consent to smoke as he said blandly:

"It's what is known as a prisoner's model. A beautiful example of an English frigate done in 1803. It's got a sprit-topgallantsail that is enormously interesting. I've only seen one other of that period as stunning and that's in the South Kensington Museum. . . . So you see, you've really got something quite ripping."

She felt relieved: so far there was nothing in its history at odds with her rights to ownership. And it was intriguing to learn about it — made by a prisoner and all, the sprit-topgallantsail included. Not that this last mattered except that she liked the sea-going sound of it. She passed him a half-filled match-box. He nodded his thanks and lighted a cigarette.

"I first heard about it at Marseilles. I was talking ship models with an old American sea captain who had retired and was being dragged over every Cook's tour in existence by a chit of a granddaughter. He remembered distinctly seeing this model in somebody's home in Gloucester. He described it down to the last detail; there wasn't even a ratline missing. When he got through I said to him, 'I'm going over to Gloucester to get it!' He thought I was mad, of course. And as a matter of fact I was. Every collector is that and worse!"

He closed his eyes as if the very memory of his pursuit had exhausted him and she put in gently, "And what happened when you got to Gloucester?"

He revived languidly. "The usual thing. I ran around in circles. I talked to anyone who would listen to me, beat upon strange doors, frightened lone women half out of their wits at all hours of the day and night in an effort to locate my quarry. Everybody voted me crazy. Finally a deaf old fisherman gave me a clue. He'd seen, or heard, or dreamed about such a model, I couldn't quite gather which. On one point he was very definite: he was sure it had been shipped West — when, or how, or why, he couldn't remember. I made more inquiries. One fact led to another; people began to remember. I ended by establishing quite a case. At least I confirmed the sea captain's story: there *was* such a ship model and it had once been in Gloucester. It seemed reasonable to suppose that it was now somewhere in the West. But when I inquired about the West everybody seemed very vague. I discovered the West wasn't a locality — it was a state

of mind. Chicago, Omaha, San Francisco — they were all West. At least they were west of Gloucester. . . . There was only one thing for me to do and I did it: I came West!"

"Stopping at Chicago, Omaha, and San Francisco?" she threw in with faint amusement.

"And way stations — almost all of them. But ship models grew scarcer and scarcer until I arrived in San Francisco; then things began to look up. I went around to second-hand shops and antique dealers and auction rooms. There were tons of ship models and other things. In fact, the other things were much more intriguing than their ship models. I bought no end of rubbish: egg-faced studio dolls; fat Chinese gods; a Russian icon from some Alaskan church; a fan that had once been the property of the Empress Carlotta. But one simply *had* to find an excuse for hanging around as I did, asking foolish questions.

"Finally, one day in a hotel lobby I met my man — a mining prospector cracked on the subject of ships. He said at once, 'I know where that ship model is. It's in the Saltine Valley. I saw it ten years ago at a farmhouse owned by a man named Bradford. It was so strange, stumbling onto a ship model in the heart of a desert. I tried to buy it, but it belonged to the man's wife and it seemed nothing would induce her to part with it.' And, would you believe it, he tried to persuade me not to bother further? He seemed to think that because he had failed, I should too. I never met any one so absurd!"

Jane Bradford stirred, resting her chin — half reflectively, half defiantly — on her up-poised palm. His placid arrogance was enormously irritating and yet a certain admiration swept her as she said:

"I'm sorry . . . tremendously sorry . . . but of course —"

He cut her short. "My dear young lady, don't put yourself on record. It so often ends in such complete humiliation."

She drew herself up, looking down on him pityingly.

"Ten months on a wildgoose chase!" she said with faint mockery. "It's too ridiculous!"

He half closed his lids and she could see his glance fixed pensively on his quarry. "Why ridiculous?" he drawled. "It's not on record that a wild goose has never been caught."

"Oh, if one had a lifetime, I dare say ——"

"That's just the point: I have!"

Her answer was a rippling laugh keyed to a high note of derision.

There seemed no end to his audacities: point-blank without any preliminaries he said:

"Would it be too much trouble to ask you for a cup of tea?"

The prospect dismayed her but, remembering the simplicity of such occasions in all the English novels of her acquaintance, she decided that her austere pantry would yield that much hospitality. Indeed, she managed so well with her thin slices of buttered bread and her pot of strawberry jam and her brewing — at his request — of the strongest and blackest tea she ever remembered having tasted that for a season he seemed to be beguiled from his original quest. But when he left he cast such longing glances back at the narrow shelf enshrining the good ship Ariel that she felt all the delicious cruelty of a sovereign who could distribute or withhold favors.

Afterwards, in the brief desert twilight, she recalled again the delicious thrill which had come to her on the wings of the places he had mentioned: Gloucester, Marseilles, Cornwall! Contacts — that was what the sea meant to her — a force which could touch all the far places of the earth: a fluid thing, changing, flowing, ebbing, without limitations; something mysterious and impalpable which the Ariel embodied. And she knew at once what the graven image of a tribe signified. The Ariel was her graven image, as it had been her mother's before

her: the evidence of things that lay beyond reach, that always would lie beyond reach.

She remembered now that moment, years ago, when she first had seen this graven image of her mother's desire. She had looked at it with the dim comprehension of a child, unable to formulate her reactions, yet feeling a racial reaction stir her. Yes, always the sea had captured her imagination, yet it was not until her sixteenth year that she had had her first glimpse of it. They had gone, she and her mother, to a little white strip of beach lapped by the Pacific, and her mother's joy at returning, even briefly, to her lost inheritance was moving and pathetic.

At first Jane Bradford had been disappointed, naturally; only a dull anticipation ever is completely satisfied at realization. It had been a gray-soiled day for one thing and the water had stretched out before her in turbid colorless inertion — and this with her expectations keyed to something thunderous and glittering. Later, of course, she came to know its iridescences; its purple and green splendor; its frothing gaiety; its sky-blue calm. A fresh revelation for every day, a discreet withholding of its infinite secrets, a thing synonymous with the perfect lover or the perfect wanton (according to one's understanding) until she grew to find it matching slowly, insinuatingly, all the brave things her mother had said of it; all the brave things that only an exile *could* say.

An exile: that was what her mother had been, what her mother remained to the last day of her life — a woman born with the thunder of the Atlantic in her ears and condemned to the dry crisp silences of the desert. She had followed a land-hungry husband West — he who, in the end, was beaten by the very patch of ground which he sought to subdue and capture. A devilish bit of ground that, rimmed in by blunt scarred hills and coaxed to anæmic harvests with the dribbling overflow of a slow brackish stream which somehow managed to survive the consuming heat. . . . Yes, Mildred Bradford had offered

everything upon the altar of this adventure; everything but her child. It was as if she had set her teeth grimly together and shaken her fist in the face of the desert which she hated so passionately and said:

"You shall never possess my child — *never!*"

And so from the first she had crooned softly to the nursling at her breast, songs of the sea, "I saw three ships a-sailing, a-sailing o'er the sea" — these were the first words that Jane ever remembered hearing in a land of powdered dust and panting lizards and still clear noons.

Then later had come the stories — tales of the sea, pictures of the fishing village of Gloucester where her mother had been born. Gray, misty pictures; steel-blue, white-capped pictures; green-gold, sunlit pictures . . . drenched, drenched in moisture . . . cool to listen to. And finally the day when, in a package, had come from home two curious things — a ship model and a conch shell. . . . "I saw three ships a-sailing!" In a flash this picture ceased to be an abstraction.

As for the conch shell, Jane Bradford had held it to her ear while her mother had said:

"Listen! . . . There! Now you have heard the sea!"

It had been mysterious, this moment, and solemn — almost like a confirmation. It delivered Jane Bradford, somehow, from the sunburnt thrall of the desert and sealed her forever to the sea!

Yes, from that moment all Jane Bradford's dreams had the sea for a background with the gallant ship Ariel as her fetish and the conch shell an oracle filled with incomprehensible voices.

He met her the next day at the schoolhouse and walked home with her, swinging his walking-stick vigorously. He carried an enormous orange-colored box with a procession of Chinese figures waving banners on it. For a town like Mesquite nothing could have been more diverting. At her doorstep he said:

"Aren't you going to give me my daily tea?"

"Yes, after you've told me your name."

"Cyril," he answered dryly.

His reticence annoyed her but she kept her temper. "Cyril!" she repeated, with a little inflection of sarcasm. "You must be a duke or something."

"*Must* is a terribly unpleasant word," he flung back.

She replied by unlocking the door and waving him in; he handed her the orange-colored box. "It's one of those rubbishy studio dolls that I picked up in San Francisco when I was *doing* all the antique shops. . . . Of course I've no use for it."

"Is that why you brought it to me?" she asked, wondering at the sharp quality of her insolence as she tossed the box unopened upon a couch.

He gave her a tolerant smile which immediately put her at a disadvantage. She took refuge in her preparations for tea. He leaned back, stretching his legs out languorously, and she could see that his lazy glance was fixed on nothing save the good ship Ariel. She brought in the tea and rattled the cups to recall him. Really, she thought, for anyone who wore spats and was named Cyril his manners were extraordinarily bad. He revived languidly and she served him, a severe note of disapproval hardening her upper lip. But he was quite oblivious.

She left her own cup to cool and went to the orange-colored box, snapping the cord which secured its lid.

"I hope you understand," she said disagreeably, "that my decision about the Ariel is final. . . . I shall *never* sell it to *anybody!*"

He made no reply. . . . She thrust her hands into the box and dragged out a lean, spineless rag doll with a vacuous face that somehow contrived to look disparagingly human. She gave it an impatient shake and literally flung it into a near-by chair. It sat up, leering at her.

"You didn't suppose," she exclaimed, "that you could bribe me with a thing like that!"

"Beware of Greeks bearing gifts: is that it?"

"If you want to put it that way."

He turned two eyes mild with reproach upon her. "That's a very ungracious speech for such a charming young lady."

He kept on, for an entire week, drinking her tea and carrying gifts to her: fat Chinese gods, a Russian icon of beaten silver, a fan that had once been the property of the Empress Carlotta . . . every strange thing, in short, which he had acquired in his quest of the Ariel. It was the fan that did the most to unsettle her: old ivory and lace with courtly figures painted on it. When she opened it a haunting perfume would fill the air, evoking dreams. This had been the bauble of a lovely woman and her personality still clung to it. . . . Upon the faded trappings of Jane Bradford's habitation these alien toys fell like jeweled beetles upon a dusty leafage. They were like a carnival troupe in flight, resting at a drab wayside inn. And the capacity within her that made sentinels of the cotton-woods, and filled the Ariel's empty sails, and gave an authentic voice to the conch shell, animating them with eerie life, welcomed them.

Sometimes as she sat opposite him, dropping the required lumps of sugar into his tea, she felt the whole incident of his coming and his presence to be a brittle dream that the slightest jar would shatter. She knew the neighbors were wondering about him, laughing at his ridiculous walking-stick and spats, but she had a way of deflecting their inquiries which they would scarcely have forgiven in another. The daughter of Mildred Bradford was bound to be queer, and so they accepted her with indulgence. But even if she had lacked reticence, how could she have answered them? Could she have told the inhabitants of Mesquite, "His name is Cyril, and he has come all the way from Cornwall to gain my model of the good ship Ariel?" Fancy how they would have received

such a statement! It sounded outrageous even to her, committed as she was to phantasy.

But at other times there was a thin reality about him, softened by pathos which brought a little catch in her throat. "So I run about the world collecting toys." A thwarted desire lay back of this admission in spite of the air of inconsequence with which he carried it off. One day he caught a look of half interrogation, half pity which she had thrown at him and he tossed it back with the quiet mirth in his eyes. She flushed.

"I suppose," he drawled, "that my sort is new to you."

"*Your* sort!" she could only echo in her embarrassment.

"Yes — a man who collects things."

She met his gaze clearly now. "Not exactly. There's a cowpuncher over by Windgate who has a room full of rattlesnake skins. They say he'll ride a hundred miles to pick up a new one. I remember when I was a child he dropped in on us at noon one day and stayed to dinner. There was a rattlesnake skin that my father intended working into a belt drying on the wall. When he left, the skin was gone. He could have had it for the asking, but I guess he was afraid to risk it. I can recall how my father laughed."

He let the glinting light in his eyes smoulder. "You understand then that a man who collects things has no conscience . . . he stops at nothing."

She faced him squarely. "What you mean is that if worst came to worst, you could steal the Ariel."

He nodded. "Oh, very much sooner than that." He came suddenly to his feet and in an instant he was standing before her with the ship model in his profane hands.

A chill ran over her. "You wouldn't do that," she heard herself saying reproachfully.

He laughed and set the Ariel back. "Not until I've asked for it, at any rate. I shall be much more sporting than your cowpuncher. . . . Besides, it won't be necessary."

"Ah, you think I'm generous!" was all she could say in reply.

"Better than that! I think you're kind."

"I'm not," she said stubbornly. "It's ridiculous, your wanting it at all. You must have dozens of ship models."

"A hundred anyway," he cut in quietly.

"A hundred, then! While I've just got one."

"That's what makes it absurd. . . . Just one of anything is so stupid!"

His threat to steal the Ariel put a keen edge on the situation. She felt like a princess in a fairy tale with a magical possession to guard. And the two darkly green poplars before her door became more and more the sentinels she had fancied them, only now they were enchanted. But try as she would, she could not make a sinister figure of a male in tweeds and spats, carrying a cane, and drinking tea with her. And yet she felt him quite capable of turning thief, almost more capable than a cowpuncher with a flair for rattlers' skins.

A man who could travel clear from Marseilles, France, to Mesquite, Nevada, in quest of his object would scarcely be balked by thin scruples. . . . She could have dealt with a cowpuncher who stole from her in a cowpuncher's way: or, more properly, she could have turned him over to the community for chastisement, which held every possibility of an unpleasant and irrevocable dangling from a convenient tree. But there was something too grotesque and out-of-the-picture about a lynching party with Cyril as the objective. No, it would be impossible to deal in any such fashion with a man who ran about the world collecting toys: dolls and Russian icons and lace fans; who said, "I shall be more sporting than your cowpuncher."

When he came again he had a book for her: *A Hundred Famous Ship Models.* And remembering his words of the day before she said, "Your collection?"

He laughed. "I should say not. I've not a single ex-

ample as distinguished as the least of these. But? I shall have *one* as corking — when I carry back the Ariel." He opened the book to the first page. "This," he said, "is an Egyptian tomb model and opposite is the picture of a Viking ship at Gogstad. . . . Norsemen buried their ships and raised a mound over them. Whalers sprang from this type."

She bent over the huge book, fascinated. He described the solid oak planking of the Viking ships, and the square-sail of flax and the dragon's head at the bow. These were the ships (he explained to her) with tents stretched on deck for sleeping quarters, in which the Scandinavians voyaged to pillage Great Britain, Iceland, France, and even North America.

"Great vultures seeking spoils," he said.

She shook her head and her glance traveled through the open door far beyond the hills that hemmed the Saltine Valley.

"No," she protested, "they're more like eagles to me — free like eagles!"

He kept his glance questioningly upon her. "Like eagles liberating a race?"

"Yes — how did you guess?"

Later came models with platforms raised for the archers. Her eyes glistened. "The beginning of navies!" she cried, clapping her hands.

"How quickly you see things!" he commented in swift admiration. "Now we've come to the point where trade is born. These ships belonged to the Hanseatic League. They carried furs from Russia: ermine and sable for kings' cloaks. And copper from Sweden and woven cloth from England."

There followed bulky galleons which had fathered modern battleships, and in their wake the famous Henry Grace à Dieu launched in 1514.

"Henry Grace à Dieu!" she repeated, midway between interrogation and pleasure in just the sound of the name.

"Gorgeous, isn't it? . . . Built specially to bear Henry VIII from Dover to meet Francis I upon the Field of the Cloth of Gold. . . . And here is a model of Drake's Golden Hind. And no end of Venetian traders. Can you imagine the treasure they carried back to Italy? . . . And here ——"

She put her hand on his as he turned the next page. "Let's stop right there," she said, "at Henry Grace à Dieu and The Golden Hind and the 'Venetian traders.'"

She felt the fleeting pressure of his cool white fingers. "They do stir up beauty in a person, don't they? . . . But we're only halfway through. There is still Mr. Pepys' Loyal London and Lord Nelson's Victory and the Chinese tea-clippers."

"Let's save them until to-morrow," she pleaded.

He turned the pages back to the Henry Grace à Dieu. "Do you know," he said, looking at her intently, "that's the first time you ever asked me to come back."

Without answering she looked down at the stately outline of the Henry Grace à Dieu. If she had spoken she would have said, "But I wanted you." And in the flush of this realization her silence became prolonged.

The next afternoon when they had finished with Mr. Pepys' Loyal London and Lord Nelson's Victory and the Chinese tea-clippers she closed the huge book gently and she said:

"And, now, what about *your* models — the hundred or more that *you* own?"

He gave a deprecating laugh. "I told you yesterday they're not a patch on any of these. Simple church models and the like. Poor things, but my own."

"Church models?"

"Yes, models hung in the churches for God's favor and blessing. You'll find them in all the French fishing villages. They make models of their sea-going craft and hang them from the church rafters. . . . It's a quaint custom."

She laid the book aside. "I think I should like your collection best," she said gravely.

His eyes smiled back at her. "Yes, I think you would."

"And if," she went on soberly, "I ever were to part with the Ariel I should like to think of it there — among the church models."

"Oh, I've plenty of profane types," he laughed. "They're not all such pious examples."

"It isn't that," she answered, "but the Ariel wouldn't shine in all that grand crowd." She pointed to the closed book. "It's a humble thing and it's always been in humble company."

He shook his head. "You're wrong. It belongs with the best. And in the end it will find its level. As a matter of fact, I shouldn't be able to keep it always . . . it wouldn't be fair. My conscience would reprove me. Oh, I'll hold it captive for a while, as you have. And then one day I'll screw up my courage and place it where it should be — with the Henry Grace à Dieu and Mr. Pepys' Loyal London and the Golden Hind."

"*Hold it captive, as I have!*" she found herself repeating slowly.

"Yes, isn't it imprisoned here? . . . You're the only one who really ever sees it."

She stood up. "It's mine, isn't it? Haven't I the right to imprison it?" Her voice rose with helpless vehemence.

"No, no one has the right to imprison a beautiful thing." She had no answer for him and he spoke again, rapidly, pressing home his advantage. "I mean to be fair. It isn't as if I'm asking you to *give* it to me. I'll pay you well for it. Usually I haggle over these things. Not because I'm close-fisted but because it's part of the game; like bringing down a bird in a single shot. But you — I'm going to tell you right off what it's worth: at least a thousand dollars if you want to know. And I'm prepared to pay that much — now, this very minute!"

"A thousand dollars! . . . No, it can't be worth that!"

"It may be worth more."

She went over to the shelf and stood gazing up at her treasure. When she finally spoke her voice was brittle:

"I shall never sell it," she said, "*never!*"

He shrugged his shoulders. "There is only one thing left, then," was his quiet answer.

After he had said good-night she took the Ariel down and hid it, not in the least effectively but with a sense of taking due precaution. The room seemed positively empty. Fancy anyone imagining that she would part with it! — a thing bound up with every association of her childhood! . . . No, there was nothing that could take its place — not even the ivory-and-lace fan that once had been the property of the Empress Carlotta. . . . As for the thousand dollars, it was an affront to fancy that she would sell her birthright for such an obvious mess of pottage. . . . And yet, a thousand dollars might liberate her; might be the wings that would carry her over the rim of the blunt, scarred hills to freedom; upward as the meadow lark had been carried on that day when a truant shower had released a brief but violent ecstasy. This thought swept her like a gust, shaking her constancy. She put the conch shell to her ears and its voice was the moist voice of the sea, calling to her. And as she closed her eyes she smelled the lupines among the sand dunes, and heard the curlew's cry, and felt the cool spray against her cheek.

"The sea is a passion with you, isn't it?"

That was almost the first question he had asked her. . . . Well, he was offering her the sea in terms of a thousand dollars. Offering her the sea. . . . She listened again to the clipt voices that poured into her ears, distant roars, the soft plashing of water among the rocky pools. . . . Offering her something she already possessed — that was the thought which finally steadied her.

She rose and uncovered the Ariel again, setting it this time upon the table before her; the book of a hundred

ship models stood open to the Henry Grace à Dieu. She would have liked to see it, this Henry Grace à Dieu, on the morning when it had weighed anchor at Dover with its courtly passenger list — setting out for the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Swords flashing from jeweled scabbards; wimples fluttering in the breeze; brocades and lace and laughter, perfume and ermine and sunlight. . . . And there was Drake's Golden Hind to scan again; and the Venetian traders and Mr. Pepys' Loyal London and Lord Nelson's Victory, and the Chinese tea-clippers. . . . What processions and pageants and conquests they called up! And opposite them stood the Ariel, her Ariel: a beautiful example of an English frigate done in 1803 with its enormously interesting sprit-topgallantsail. A prisoner's model. A political prisoner? . . . a prisoner of the wars? . . . a prisoner of circumstance? . . . A murderer, perhaps — who could say? Releasing beauty; escaping upon the wings of creation to a truant freedom. Yes, it was beautiful, she could see it now. More beautiful than she had ever imagined, and it belonged with the others.

The realization came to her quietly, numbing her almost with its placid inevitability. It didn't belong to her; it never had. . . . She sat all night with that thought and the next day when he tapped upon her door she felt her heart stand still.

He said at once, "This is my last visit . . . I have come to ask you once more: Will you sell the Ariel to me?"

She answered him clearly. "No . . . I shall *give* it to you."

He stared at her. "But I must pay you."

"You cannot," she answered simply.

He sat for a moment in deep silence. "There is another thing I want," he said.

She rose with a fluttering fear. "Isn't one wild goose enough to capture?"

"One of anything is so ridiculous."

She could feel her lips harden. "My conch shell? No, you can't have that!"

He shook his head. "Can't you guess? . . . *You!*"

It was her turn to stare and yet she was not even frightened. She did not know his name . . . she did not know his fortune . . . she did not know his temper . . . but she knew her answer.

"I've a place in Cornwall — the sea laps it for miles and miles. And there is a castle on a cliff within sound and smell of it. . . ."

"A castle on a cliff," she heard herself echoing. "Then you are a ——"

"Duke or something? . . . Does it matter?"

"No, it doesn't matter in the least," she answered.

CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE

Mr. Dobie says of himself, "My career has been most prosaic. I worked many years in an insurance office and did my writing on the side. A good ten years passed before I had a single acceptance." To him, this may seem a prosaic story, "learning to write by writing" as he himself says; but to readers who have followed Mr. Dobie's steady advance from his first published story in 1910 to the splendid, colorful output of the last ten years this seems the story of triumphant progress. The story *Wild Geese* was awarded a prize in the Short Story Contest conducted by *Harper's Magazine* in 1925. Another excellent story by Mr. Dobie, *The Hands of the Enemy*, has recently withstood the test of many judgments. Awarded a prize in the Harper's Magazine Contest, it was later included in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1925* and was also ranked very high by the O. Henry Memorial committee. Mr. Dobie lives in San Francisco, the city of his birth.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. In this story the atmosphere of romance is created in the very beginning. Point out the figures of speech in the first paragraph which add to this effect. Note also how the choice of words is important: "the thrill of rain," "her

pulses leaping," the cottonwoods like "sentinels standing guard."

2. What do you learn of Jane Bradford's mother? Why did a woman "reared with the tang of sea-mists in her nostrils" come to live in a western desert country? There is a story for some one in this woman's life. Why not be the one to write it, telling of her departure from her beloved New England coast, of her homesickness for the sea, of the arrival of the package containing the conch shell and the Ariel?
3. Why did Mr. Dobie choose a desert country as the setting for this story? Find and read in class words or phrases which build up the desert picture, likewise those which suggest the sea. Half the class might write a paragraph on what Jane could see from the house behind the cottonwoods, while the other half writes on what Jane's grandfather saw from his cottage window. Read William Vaughn Moody's exquisite poem, *Gloucester Moors*, which contains these lines:

> "A mile behind is Gloucester town
> Where the fishing fleets put in;
> A mile ahead the land dips down
> And the woods and farms begin.
> Here, where the moors stretch free
> In the high blue afternoon,
> Are the marching sun and the talking sea,
> And the racing winds that wheel and flee
> On the flying heels of June."

4. How soon do you guess the outcome of the story? Are you satisfied with the conclusion? What questions remain unanswered? Each member of the class might write on the subject, *Further Chronicles of the Good Ship Ariel*. Let the class decide which story is most probable and conforms most closely to the spirit of Mr. Dobie's story.
5. Have you read an essay by Henry van Dyke entitled *Who Owns the Mountains?* Try to read it and decide what van Dyke would think of Cyril's statement to Jane, "No one has the right to imprison a beautiful thing."
6. Re-read the story from the time when Cyril brings the book of ship models. Do you not feel that every picture suggests a story of romance and adventure? What a tale

might a common sailor on the Henry Grace à Dieu have told; or the sturdy Norseman who sailed the Viking ship with a dragon's head on the bow! Try writing one of these stories.

7. This story contains so large an element of poetry that it would be too bad to miss what the poets have said of the lure of the sea. Do you know any of the poetry of John Masefield? Have you ever held a shell to your ear and heard what James Stephens tells about in his poem called *The Shell?* How many will read one of the poems below and interpret it to the class?

Cargoes — John Masefield
The Tarry Buccaneer — John Masefield
Roadway — John Masefield
A Wanderer's Story — John Masefield
The Shell — James Stephens
A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea — Allan Cunningham
The Sea Gipsy — Richard Hovey
In an Oriental Harbour — Cale Young Rice

Other stories by Charles Caldwell Dobie:

The Hands of the Enemy	*Vision*
Horse and Horse	*Christmas Cakes*
All or Nothing	*The Open Window*

FOOTFALLS[1]

By WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

This is not an easy story; not a road for tender feet or for casual feet. Better the meadows. Let me warn you, it is as hard as that old man's soul and as sunless as his eyes. It has its inception in catastrophe, and its end in an almost incredible act of violence; between them it tells barely how one, long blind, can become also deaf and dumb.

He lived in one of those old Puritan sea towns where the strain has come down austere and moribund, so that his act would not be quite unbelievable. Except that the town is no longer Puritan and Yankee. It has been betrayed; it has become an outpost of the Portuguese islands.

This man, the blind cobbler himself, was Portuguese from St. Michael, in the Western Islands, and his name was Boaz Negro.

He was happy. An unquenchable exuberance lived in him. When he arose in the morning he made vast, as it were uncontrollable, gestures with his stout arms. He came into his shop singing. His voice, strong and deep as the chest from which it emanated, rolled out through the doorway and along the street, and the fishermen, done with their morning work and lounging and smoking along the wharves, said, "Boaz is to work already." Then they came up to sit in the shop.

In that town a cobbler's shop is a club. One sees the interior always dimly thronged. They sit on the benches watching the artisan at his work for hours, and they talk about everything in the world. A cobbler is known by the company he keeps.

Boaz Negro kept young company. He would have

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nothing to do with the old. On his own head the gray hairs set thickly.

He had a grown son. But the benches in his shop were for the lusty and valiant young, men who could spend the night drinking, and then at three o'clock in the morning turn out in the rain and dark to pull at the weirs, sing songs, buffet one another among the slippery fish in the boat's bottom, and make loud jokes about the fundamental things, love and birth and death. Harkening to their boasts and strong prophecies his breast heaved and his heart beat faster. He was a large, full-blooded fellow, fashioned for exploits; the flame in his darkness burned higher even to hear of them.

It is scarcely conceivable how Boaz Negro could have come through this much of his life still possessed of that unquenchable and priceless exuberance; how he would sing in the dawn; how, simply listening to the recital of deeds in gale or brawl, he could easily forget himself, a blind man, tied to a shop and a last; easily make of himself a lusty young fellow breasting the sunlit and adventurous tide of life.

He had had a wife, whom he had loved. Fate, which had scourged him with the initial scourge of blindness, had seen fit to take his Angelina away. He had four sons. Three, one after another, had been removed, leaving only Manuel, the youngest. Recovering slowly, with agony, from each of these recurrent blows, his unquenchable exuberance had lived. And there was another thing quite as extraordinary. He had never done anything but work, and that sort of thing may kill the flame where an abrupt catastrophe fails. Work in the dark. Work, work, work! And accompanied by privation; an almost miserly scale of personal economy. Yes, indeed, he had "skinned his fingers," especially in the earlier years. When it tells most.

How he had worked! Not alone in the daytime, but also sometimes, when orders were heavy, far into the night. It was strange for one, passing along that deserted street

at midnight, to hear issuing from the black shop of Boaz Negro the rhythmical tap-tap-tap of hammer on wooden peg.

Nor was that sound all: no man in town could get far past that shop in his nocturnal wandering unobserved. No more than a dozen footfalls, and from the darkness Boaz's voice rolled forth, fraternal, stentorian, "Good-night, Antone!" "Good-night to you, Caleb Snow!"

To Boaz Negro it was still broad day.

Now, because of this, he was what might be called a substantial man. He owned his place, his shop, opening on the sidewalk, and behind it the dwelling-house with trellised galleries upstairs and down.

And there was always something for his son, a "piece for the pocket," a dollar-, five-, or even a ten-dollar bill if he had "got to have it." Manuel was a "good boy." Boaz not only said this; he felt that he was assured of it in his understanding, to the infinite peace of his heart.

It was curious that he should be ignorant only of the one nearest to him. Not because he was physically blind. Be certain he knew more of other men and of other men's sons than they or their neighbors did. More, that is to say, of their hearts and understandings, their idiosyncrasies, and their ultimate weight in the balance-pan of eternity.

His simple explanation of Manuel was that Manuel "wasn't too stout." To others he said this, and to himself. Manuel was not indeed too robust. How should he be vigorous when he never did anything to make him so? He never worked. Why should he work, when existence was provided for, and when there was always that "piece for the pocket"? Even a ten-dollar bill on a Saturday night! No, Manuel "wasn't too stout."

In the shop they let it go at that. The missteps and frailties of every one else in the world were canvassed there with the most shameless publicity. But Boaz Negro was a blind man, and in a sense their host. Those reckless, strong young fellows respected and loved him. It was

allowed to stand at that. Manuel was "a good boy." Which did not prevent them, by the way, from joining later in the general condemnation of that father's laxity — "the ruination of the boy!"

"He should have put him to work, that's what."

"He should have said to Manuel, 'Look here, if you want a dollar, go earn it first.'"

As a matter of fact, only one man ever gave Boaz the advice direct. That was Campbell Wood. And Wood never sat in that shop.

In every small town there is one young man who is spoken of as "rising." As often as not he is not a native, but "from away."

In this town Campbell Wood was that man. He had come from another part of the state to take a place in the bank. He lived in the upper story of Boaz Negro's house, the ground floor now doing for Boaz and the meager remnant of his family. The old woman who came in to tidy up for the cobbler looked after Wood's rooms as well.

Dealing with Wood, one had first of all the sense of his incorruptibility. A little ruthless perhaps, as if one could imagine him, in defense of his integrity, cutting off his friend, cutting off his own hand, cutting off the very stream flowing out from the wellsprings of human kindness. An exaggeration, perhaps.

He was by long odds the most eligible young man in town; good looking in a spare, ruddy, sandy-haired Scottish fashion; important, incorruptible, "rising." But he took good care of his heart. Precisely that; like a sharp-eyed duenna to his own heart. One felt that here was the man, if ever was the man, who held his destiny in his own hand. Failing, of course, some quite gratuitous and unforeseeable catastrophe.

Not that he was not human, or even incapable of laughter or passion. He was, in a way, immensely accessible. He never clapped one on the shoulder; on the other hand, he never failed to speak. Not even to Boaz.

Returning from the bank in the afternoon, he had always a word for the cobbler. Passing out again to supper at his boarding-place, he had another, about the weather, the prospects of rain. And if Boaz were at work in the dark when he returned from an evening at the Board of Trade, there was a "Good-night, Mr. Negro!"

On Boaz's part, his attitude toward his lodger was curious and paradoxical. He did not pretend to anything less than reverence for the young man's position; precisely on account of that position he was conscious toward Wood of a vague distrust. This was because he was an uneducated fellow.

To the uneducated the idea of large finance is as uncomfortable as the idea of the law. It must be said for Boaz that, responsive to Wood's unfailing civility, he fought against this sensation of dim and somehow shameful distrust. Nevertheless his whole parental soul was in arms that evening, when, returning from the bank and finding the shop empty of loungers, Wood paused a moment to propose the bit of advice already referred to.

"Haven't you ever thought of having Manuel learn the trade?"

A suspicion, a kind of presumption, lighted the fires of defense.

"Shoemaking," said Boaz, "is good enough for a blind man."

"Oh, I don't know. At least it's better than doing nothing at all."

Boaz's hammer was still. He sat silent, monumental. Outwardly. For once his unfailing response had failed him, "Manuel ain't too stout, you know." Perhaps it had become suddenly inadequate.

He hated Wood; he despised Wood; more than ever before, a hundredfold more, quite abruptly, he distrusted Wood.

How could a man say such things as Wood had said? And where Manuel himself might hear!

Where Manuel *had* heard! Boaz's other emotions — hatred and contempt and distrust — were overshadowed. Sitting in darkness, no sound had come to his ears, no footfall, no infinitesimal creaking of the floor-plank. Yet by some sixth uncanny sense of the blind he was aware that Manual was standing in the dusk of the entry joining the shop to the house.

Boaz made a Herculean effort. The voice came out of his throat, harsh, bitter, and loud enough to have carried ten times the distance to his son's ears.

"Manuel is a good boy!"

"Yes — h'm — yes — I suppose so."

Wood shifted his weight. He seemed uncomfortable.

"Well. I'll be running along, I — ugh! Heavens!"

Something was happening. Boaz heard exclamations, breathings, the rustle of sleeve-cloth in large, frantic, and futile graspings — all without understanding. Immediately there was an impact on the floor, and with it the unmistakable clink of metal. Boaz even heard that the metal was minted, and that the coins were gold. He understood. A coin-sack, gripped not quite carefully enough for the moment under the other's overcoat, had shifted, slipped, escaped, and fallen.

And Manuel had heard!

It was a dreadful moment for Boaz, dreadful in its native sense, as full of dread. Why? It was a moment of horrid revelation, ruthless clarification. His son, his link with the departed Angelina, that "good boy" — Manuel, standing in the shadow of the entry, visible alone to the blind, had heard the clink of falling gold, and — *and Boaz wished that he had not!*

There, amazing, disconcerting, destroying, stood the sudden fact.

Sitting as impassive and monumental as ever, his strong, bleached hands at rest on his work, round drops of sweat came out on Boaz's forehead. He scarcely took the sense of what Wood was saying. Only fragments.

"Government money, understand — for the breakwater workings — huge — too many people know here, everywhere — don't trust the safe — tin safe — 'Noah's Ark' — give you my word — Heavens, no!"

It boiled down to this — the money, more money than was good for that antiquated "Noah's Ark" at the bank — and whose contemplated sojourn there over night was public to too many minds — in short, Wood was not only incorruptible; he was canny. To what one of those minds, now, would it occur that he should take away that money bodily, under casual cover of his coat, to his own lodgings behind the cobbler-shop of Boaz Negro? For this one, this important night!

He was sorry the coin-sack had slipped, because he did not like to have the responsibility of secret sharer cast upon anyone, even upon Boaz, even by accident. On the other hand, how tremendously fortunate that it had been Boaz and not another. So far as that went, Wood had no more anxiety now than before. One incorruptible knows another.

"I'd trust you, Mr. Negro" (that was one of the fragments which came and stuck in the cobbler's brain), "as far as I would myself. As long as it's only you. I'm just going up here and throw it under the bed. Oh, yes, certainly."

Boaz ate no supper. For the first time in his life food was dry in his gullet. Even under those other successive crushing blows of Fate the full and generous habit of his functionings had carried on unabated; he had always eaten what was set before him. To-night, over his untouched plate, he watched Manuel with the sightless eyes, keeping track of his every mouthful, word, intonation, breath. What profit he expected to extract from this catlike surveillance it is impossible to say.

When they arose from the supper-table Boaz made another Herculean effort.

"Manuel, you're a good boy!"

The formula had a quality of appeal, of despair, and of command.

"Manuel, you should be short of money, maybe. Look, what's this? A tenner? Well, there's a piece for the pocket; go and enjoy yourself."

He would have been frightened had Manuel, upsetting tradition, declined the offering. With the morbid contrariness of the human imagination, the boy's avid grasping gave him no comfort.

He went out into the shop, where it was already dark, drew to him his last, his tools, mallets, cutters, pegs, leather. And having prepared to work, he remained idle. He found himself listening.

It has been observed that the large phenomena of sunlight and darkness were nothing to Boaz Negro. A busy night was broad day. Yet there was a difference; he knew it with the blind man's eyes, the ears.

Day was a vast confusion, or rather a wide fabric, of sounds; great and little sounds all woven together, voices, footfalls, wheels, far-off whistles and foghorns, flies buzzing in the sun. Night was another thing. Still there were voices and footfalls, but rarer, emerging from the large, pure body of silence as definite, surprising, and yet familiar entities.

To-night there was an easterly wind, coming off the water and carrying the sound of waves. So far as other fugitive sounds were concerned it was the same as silence. The wind made little difference to the ears. It nullified, from one direction at least, the other two visual processes of the blind, the sense of touch and the sense of smell. It blew away from the shop, toward the living-house.

As has been said, Boaz found himself listening, scrutinizing with an extraordinary attention, this immense background of sound. He heard footfalls. The story of that night was written, for him, in footfalls.

He heard them moving about the house, the lower floor, prowling here, there, halting for long spaces, advancing,

retreating softly on the planks. About this aimless, interminable perambulation there was something to twist the nerves, something led and at the same time driven like a succession of frail and indecisive charges.

Boaz lifted himself from his chair. All his impulse called him to make a stir, join battle, cast in the breach the reënforcement of his presence, authority, good will. He sank back again; his hands fell down. The curious impotence of the spectator held him.

He heard footfalls, too, on the upper floor, a little fainter, borne to the inner rather than the outer ear, along the solid causeway of partitions and floor, the legs of his chair, the bony framework of his body. Very faint indeed. Sinking back easily into the background of the wind. They, too, came and went, this room, that, to the passage, the stair-head, and away. About them, too, there was the same quality of being led and at the same time of being driven.

Time went by. In his darkness it seemed to Boaz that hours must have passed. He heard voices. Together with the footfalls, that abrupt, brief, and (in view of Wood's position) astounding interchange of sentences made up his history of the night. Wood must have opened the door at the head of the stair; by the sound of his voice he would be standing there, peering below perhaps; perhaps listening.

"What's wrong down there?" he called. "Why don't you go to bed?"

After a moment, came Manuel's voice, "Ain't sleepy."

"Neither am I. Look here, do you like to play cards?"

"What kind? Euchre! I like euchre all right. Or pitch."

"Well, what would you say to coming up and having a game of euchre then, Manuel? If you can't sleep?"

"That'd be all right."

The lower footfalls ascended to join the footfalls on the upper floor. There was the sound of a door closing.

Boaz sat still. In the gloom he might have been taken for a piece of furniture, of machinery, an extraordinary lay figure, perhaps, for the trying on of the boots he made. He seemed scarcely to breathe, only the sweat starting from his brow giving him an aspect of life.

He ought to have run, and leaped up that inner stair and pounded with his fists on that door. He seemed unable to move. At rare intervals feet passed on the sidewalk outside, just at his elbow, so to say, and yet somehow, to-night, immeasurably far away. Beyond the orbit of the moon. He heard Rugg, the policeman, noting the silence of the shop, muttering, "Boaz is to bed to-night," as he passed.

The wind increased. It poured against the shop with its deep, continuous sound of a river. Submerged in its body, Boaz caught the note of the town bell striking midnight.

Once more, after a long time, he heard footfalls. He heard them coming around the corner of the shop from the house, footfalls half swallowed by the wind, passing discreetly, without haste, retreating, merging step by step with the huge, incessant background of the wind.

Boaz's muscles tightened all over him. He had the impulse to start up, to fling open the door, shout into the night, "What are you doing? Stop there! Say! What are you doing and where are you going?"

And as before, the curious impotence of the spectator held him motionless. He had not stirred in his chair. And those footfalls, upon which hinged, as it were, that momentous decade of his life, were gone.

There was nothing to listen for now. Yet he continued to listen. Once or twice, half arousing himself, he drew toward him his unfinished work. And then relapsed into immobility.

As has been said, the wind, making little difference to the ears, made all the difference in the world with the sense of feeling and the sense of smell. From the one important direction of the house. That is how it could come about

that Boaz Negro could sit, waiting and listening to nothing in the shop and remain ignorant of disaster until the alarm had gone and come back again, pounding, shouting, clanging.

"*Fire!*" he heard them bawling in the street. "*Fire! Fire!*"

Only slowly did he understand that the fire was in his own house.

There is nothing stiller in the world than the skeleton of a house in the dawn after a fire. It is as if everything living, positive, violent, had been completely drained in the one flaming act of violence, leaving nothing but negation till the end of time. It is worse than a tomb. A monstrous stillness! Even the footfalls of the searchers cannot disturb it, for they are separate and superficial. In its presence they are almost frivolous.

Half an hour after dawn the searchers found the body, if what was left from that consuming ordeal might be called a body. The discovery came as a shock. It seemed incredible that the occupant of that house, no cripple or invalid but an able man in the prime of youth, should not have awakened and made good his escape. It was the upper floor which had caught; the stairs had stood to the last. It was beyond calculation, even if he had been asleep!

And he had not been asleep. This second and infinitely more appalling discovery began to be known. Slowly. By a hint, a breath of rumor here; there an allusion, half taken back. The man, whose incinerated body still lay curled in its bed of cinders, had been dressed at the moment of disaster; even to the watch, the cuff-buttons, the studs, the very scarf-pin. Fully clothed to the last detail, precisely as those who had dealings at the bank might have seen Campbell Wood any week-day morning for the past eight months. A man does not sleep with his clothes on. The skull of the man had been broken, as if with a blunt instrument of iron. On the charred lacework of the floor

lay the leg of an old andiron with which Boaz Negro and his Angelina had set up housekeeping in that new house.

It needed only Mr. Asa Whitelaw, coming up the street from the gaping "Noah's Ark" at the bank, to round out the scandalous circle of circumstance.

"Where is Manuel?"

Boaz Negro still sat in his shop, impassive, monumental, his thick, hairy arms resting on the arms of his chair. The tools and materials of his work remained scattered about him, as his irresolute gathering of the night before had left them. Into his eyes no change could come. He had lost his house, the visible monument of all those years of "skinning his fingers." It would seem that he had lost his son. And he had lost something incalculably precious — that hitherto unquenchable exuberance of the man.

"Where is Manuel?"

When he spoke his voice was unaccented and stale, like the voice of a man already dead.

"Yes, where is Manuel?"

He had answered them with their own question.

"When did you last see him?"

Neither he nor they seemed to take note of that profound irony. "At supper."

"Tell us, Boaz; you knew about this money?"

The cobbler nodded his head.

"And did Manuel?"

He might have taken sanctuary in a legal doubt. How did he know what Manuel knew? Precisely! As before, he nodded his head.

"After supper, Boaz, you were in the shop? But you heard something?"

He went on to tell them what he had heard: the footfalls, below and above, the extraordinary conversation which had broken for a moment the silence of the inner hall. The account was bare, the phrases monosyllabic. He reported only what had been registered on the sensitive

tympanums of his ears, to the last whisper of footfalls stealing past the dark wall of the shop. Of all the formless tangle of thoughts, suspicions, interpretations, and the special and personal knowledge given to the blind which moved his brain, he said nothing.

He shut his lips there. He felt himself on the defensive. Just as he distrusted the higher ramifications of finance (his house had gone down uninsured), so before the rites and processes of that inscrutable creature, the Law, he felt himself menaced by the invisible and the unknown, helpless, oppressed; in an abject sense, skeptical.

"Keep clear of the Law!" they had told him in his youth. The monster his imagination summoned up then still stood beside him in his age.

Having exhausted his monosyllabic and superficial evidence, they could move him no farther. He became deaf and dumb. He sat before them, an image cast in some immensely heavy stuff, inanimate. His lack of visible emotion impressed them. Remembering his exuberance, it was only the stranger to see him unmoving and unmoved. Only once did they catch sight of something beyond. As they were preparing to leave he opened his mouth. What he said was like a swan-song to the years of his exuberant happiness. Even now there was no color of expression in his words, which sounded mechanical.

"Now I have lost everything. My house. My last son. Even my honor. You would not think I would like to live. But I go to live. I go to work. That *cachorra*, one day he shall come back again, in the dark night, to have a look. I shall go to show you all. That *cachorra!*"

(And from that time on, it was noted, he never referred to the fugitive by any other name than *cachorra*, which is a kind of dog. "That *cachorra!*" As if he had forfeited the relationship not only of the family, but of the very genus, the very race! "That *cachorra!*")

He pronounced this resolution without passion. When they assured him that the culprit would come back again

indeed, much sooner than he expected, "with a rope around his neck," he shook his head slowly.

"No, you shall not catch that *cachorra* now. But one day ——"

There was something about its very colorlessness which made it sound oracular. It was at least prophetic. They searched, laid their traps, proceeded with all their placards, descriptions, rewards, clues, trails. But on Manuel Negro they never laid their hands.

Months passed and became years. Boaz Negro did not rebuild his house. He might have done so, out of his earnings, for upon himself he spent scarcely anything, reverting to his old habit of an almost miserly economy. Yet perhaps it would have been harder after all. For his earnings were less and less. In that town a cobbler who sits in an empty shop is apt to want for trade. Folk take their boots to mend where they take their bodies to rest and their minds to be edified.

No longer did the walls of Boaz's shop resound to the boastful recollections of young men. Boaz had changed. He had become not only different, but opposite. A metaphor will do best. The spirit Boaz Negro had been a mellowed hillside giving upon the open sea, the sun, the warm, wild winds from beyond the blue horizon. And covered with flowers, always hungry and thirsty for the sun and the fabulous wind-bright showers of rain. It had become an entrenched camp, lying silent, sullen, verdureless, under a gray sky. He stood solitary against the world. His approaches were closed. He was blind, and he was also deaf and dumb.

Against that what can young fellows do who wish for nothing but to rest themselves and talk about their friends and enemies? They had come and they had tried. They had raised their voices even higher than before. Their boasts had grown louder, more presumptuous, more preposterous, until, before the cold separation of that unmoving and as if contemptuous presence in the cobbler's chair,

they burst of their own air, like toy balloons. And they went and left Boaz alone.

There was another thing which served, if not to keep them away, at least not to entice them back. That was the aspect of the place. It was not cheerful. It invited no one. In its way that fire-bitten ruin grew to be almost as great a scandal as the act itself had been. It was plainly an eyesore. A valuable property, on the town's main thoroughfare — and an eyesore! The neighboring owners protested.

Their protestations might as well have gone against a stone wall. The man was deaf and dumb. He had become, in a way, a kind of vegetable, for the quality of a vegetable is that, while it is endowed with life, it remains fixed in one spot. For years Boaz was scarcely seen to move foot out of that shop that was left him, a small, square, blistered promontory on the shores of ruin.

He must indeed have carried out some rudimentary sort of domestic program under the débris at the rear (he certainly did not sleep and eat in the shop). One or two lower rooms were left fairly intact. The outward aspect of the place was formless; it grew to be no more than a mound in time; the charred timbers, one or two still standing, lean and naked against the sky, lost their blackness and faded to a silvery gray. It would have seemed strange, had they not grown accustomed to the thought, to imagine that blind man, like a mole, or some slow slug, turning himself mysteriously in the depths of that gray mound — that time-silvered "eyesore."

When they saw him, however, he was in the shop. They opened the door to take in their work (when other cobblers turned them off), and they saw him seated in his chair in the half darkness, his whole person, legs, torso, neck, head, as motionless as the vegetable of which we have spoken — only his hands and his bare arms endowed with visible life. The gloom had bleached the skin to the color of damp ivory, and against the background of his im-

mobility they moved with a certain amazing monstrousness, interminably. No, they were never still. One wondered what they could be at. Surely he could not have had enough work now to keep those insatiable hands so monstrously in motion. Even far into the night. Tap-tap-tap! Blows continuous and powerful. On what? On nothing? On the bare iron last? And for what purpose? To what conceivable end?

Well, one could imagine those arms, growing paler, also growing thicker and more formidable with that unceasing labor; the muscles feeding themselves omnivorously on their own waste, the cords toughening, the bone-tissues revitalizing themselves without end. One could imagine the whole aspiration of that mute and motionless man pouring itself out into those pallid arms, and the arms taking it up with a kind of blind greed. Storing it up. Against a day!

"That *cachorra!* One day ——"

What were the thoughts of the man? What moved within that motionless cranium covered with long hair? Who can say? Behind everything, of course, stood that bitterness against the world — the blind world — blinder than he would ever be. And against "that *cachorra.*" But this was no longer a thought; it was the man.

Just as all muscular aspiration flowed into his arms, so all the energies of his senses turned to his ears. The man had become, you might say, two arms and two ears. Can you imagine a man listening, intently, through the waking hours of nine years?

Listening to footfalls. Marking with a special emphasis of concentration the beginning, rise, full passage, falling away, and dying of the footfalls. By day, by night, winter and summer and winter again. Unraveling the skein of footfalls passing up and down the street!

For three years he wondered when they would come. For the next three he wondered if they would ever come. It was during the last three that a doubt began to trouble

him. It gnawed at his huge moral strength. Like a hidden seepage of water, it undermined (in anticipation) his terrible resolution. It was a sign perhaps of age, a slipping away of the reckless infallibility of youth.

Supposing, after all, that his ears should fail him. Supposing they were capable of being tricked, without his being able to know it. Supposing that that *cachorra* should come and go, and he, Boaz, living in some vast delusion, some unrealized distortion of memory, should let him pass unknown. Supposing precisely this thing had already happened!

Or the other way around. What if he should hear the footfalls coming, even into the very shop itself? What, then, if he should strike? And what then, if it were not that *cachorra* after all? How many tens and hundreds of millions of people were there in the world? Was it possible for them all to have footfalls distinct and different?

Then they would take him and hang him. And that *cachorra* might then come and go at his own will, undisturbed.

As he sat there sometimes the sweat rolled down his nose, cold as rain.

Supposing!

Sometimes, quite suddenly, in broad day, in the booming silence of the night, he would start. Not outwardly. But beneath the pale integument of his skin all his muscles tightened and his nerves sang. His breathing stopped. It seemed almost as if his heart stopped.

What was it? Were these the feet, there, emerging faintly from the distance? Yes, there was something about them. Yes. Memory was in travail. Yes, yes, yes! No! The footfalls were already passing. They were gone, swallowed up already by time and space. Had that been that *cachorra?*

Nothing in his life had been so hard to meet as this insidious drain of distrust in his own powers; this sense of a traitor within the walls. His iron-gray hair had turned

white. It was always this now, from the beginning of the day to the end of the night: how was he to know? How was he to be inevitably, unshakably, sure?

Curiously, after all his purgatory of doubts, he did know them. For a moment at least, when he heard them, he was unshakably sure.

It was on an evening of the winter holidays, the Portuguese festival of *Menin' Jesus*. Christ was born again in a hundred mangers on a hundred tiny altars; there was cake and wine; songs went shouting by to the accompaniment of mandolins and tramping feet. The wind blew cold under a clear sky. In all the houses there were lights; even in Boaz Negro's shop a lamp was lit just now, for a man had been in for a pair of boots which Boaz had patched. The man had gone out again. Boaz was thinking of blowing out the light. It meant nothing to him.

He leaned forward, judging the position of the lamp-chimney by the heat on his face, and puffed out his cheeks to blow. Then his cheeks collapsed suddenly, and he sat back again.

It was not odd that he had failed to hear the footfalls until they were actually within the door. A crowd of merrymakers was passing just then; their songs and tramping almost shook the shop.

Boaz sat back. Beneath his passive exterior his nerves thrummed; his muscles had grown as hard as wood. Yes! Yes! But no! He had heard nothing; no more than a single step, a single foot-pressure on the planks within the door. Dear God! He could not tell!

Going through the pain of an enormous effort, he opened his lips.

"What can I do for you?"

"Well, I — I don't know. To tell the truth ——"

The voice was unfamiliar, but it might be assumed. Boaz held himself. His face remained blank, interrogating, slightly helpless.

"I am a little deaf," he said. "Come nearer."

The footfalls came halfway across the intervening floor, and there appeared to hesitate. The voice, too, had a note of uncertainty.

"I was just looking around. I have a pair of — well, you mend shoes?"

Boaz nodded his head. It was not in response to the words, for they meant nothing. What he had heard was the footfalls on the floor.

Now he was sure. As has been said, for a moment at least after he heard them he was unmistakably sure. The congestion of his muscles had passed. He was at peace.

The voice became audible once more. Before the massive preoccupation of the blind man it became still less certain of itself.

"Well, I haven't got the shoes with me. I was — just looking around."

It was amazing to Boaz, this miraculous sensation of peace.

"Wait!" Then bending his head as if listening to the winter wind, "It's cold to-night. You've left the door open. But wait!" Leaning down, his hand fell on a rope's end hanging by the chair. The gesture was one continuous, undeviating movement of the hand. No hesitation. No groping. How many hundreds, how many thousands of times, had his hand schooled itself in that gesture!

A single strong pull. With a little *bang* the front door had swung to and latched itself. Not only the front door. The other door, leading to the rear, had closed, too, and latched itself with a little *bang*. And leaning forward from his chair, Boaz blew out the light.

There was not a sound in the shop. Outside, feet continued to go by, ringing on the frozen road; voices were lifted; the wind hustled about the corners of the wooden shell with a continuous, shrill note of whistling. All of this outside, as on another planet. Within the blackness of the shop the complete silence persisted.

Boaz listened. Sitting on the edge of his chair, half-crouching, his head, with its long, unkempt, white hair, bent slightly to one side, he concentrated upon this chambered silence the full powers of his senses. He hardly breathed. The other person in that room could not be breathing at all, it seemed.

No, there was not a breath, not the stirring of a sole on wood, not the infinitesimal rustle of any fabric. It was as if in this utter stoppage of sound, even the blood had ceased to flow in the veins and arteries of that man, who was like a rat caught in a trap.

It was appalling even to Boaz; even to the cat. Listening became more than a labor. He began to have to fight against a growing impulse to shout out loud, to leap, sprawl forward without aim in that unstirred darkness — do something. Sweat rolled down from behind his ears, into his shirt-collar. He gripped the chair-arms. To keep quiet he sank his teeth into his lower lip. He would not! He would not!

And of a sudden he heard before him, in the center of the room, an outburst of breath, an outrush from lungs in the extremity of pain, thick, laborious, fearful. A coughing up of dammed air.

Pushing himself from the arms of the chair, Boaz leaped.

His fingers, passing swiftly through the air, closed on something. It was a sheaf of hair, bristly and thick. It was a man's beard.

On the road outside, up and down the street for a hundred yards, merry-making people turned to look at one another. With an abrupt cessation of laughter, of speech. Inquiringly. Even with an unconscious dilation of the pupils of their eyes.

"What was that?"

There had been a scream. There could be no doubt of that. A single, long-drawn note. Immensely high-pitched. Not as if it were human.

"What was that? Where'd it come from?"

Those nearest said it came from the cobbler-shop of Boaz Negro. They went and tried the door. It was closed; even locked, as if for the night. There was no light behind the window-shade. But Boaz would not have a light. They beat on the door. No answer.

But from where, then, had that prolonged, as if animal, note come?

They ran about, penetrating into the side lanes, interrogating, prying. Coming back at last, inevitably, to the neighborhood of Boaz Negro's shop.

The body lay on the floor at Boaz's feet, where it had tumbled down slowly after a moment from the spasmodic embrace of his arms; those ivory-colored arms which had beaten so long upon the bare surface of a last. Blows continuous and powerful. It seemed incredible. They were so weak now. They could not have lifted the hammer now.

But that beard! That bristly, thick, square beard of a stranger!

His hands remembered it. Standing with his shoulders fallen forward and his weak arms hanging down, Boaz began to shiver. The whole thing was incredible. What was on the floor there, upheld in the vast gulf of darkness, he could not see. Neither could he hear it; smell it. Nor (if he did not move his foot) could he feel it. What he did not hear, smell, or touch did not exist. It was not there. Incredible!

But that beard! All the accumulated doubtings of those years fell down upon him. After all, the thing he had been so fearful of in his weak imaginings had happened. He had killed a stranger. He, Boaz Negro, had murdered an innocent man!

And all on account of that beard. His deep panic made him light-headed. He began to confuse cause and effect. If it were not for that beard, it would have been that *cachorra.*

On this basis he began to reason with a crazy directness. And to act. He went and pried open the door into the entry. From a shelf he took down his razor. A big, heavy-heeled strop. His hands began to hurry. And the mug, half full of soap. And water. It would have to be cold water. But, after all, he thought (light-headedly), at this time of night ——

Outside, they were at the shop again. The crowd's habit is to forget a thing quickly, once it is out of sight and hearing. But there had been something about that solitary cry which continued to bother them, even in memory. Where had it been? Where had it come from? And those who had stood nearest the cobbler-shop had heard it again. They were certain now, dead certain. They could swear!

In the end they broke down the door.

If Boaz heard them he gave no sign. An absorption as complete as it was monstrous wrapped him. Kneeling in the glare of the lantern they had brought, as impervious as his own shadow sprawling behind him, he continued to shave the dead man on the floor.

No one touched him. Their minds and imaginations were arrested by the gigantic proportions of the act. The unfathomable presumption of the act. As throwing murder in their faces to the tune of a jig in a barber-shop. It is a fact that none of them so much as thought of touching him. No less than all of them, together with all other men, shorn of their imaginations — that is to say, the expressionless and imperturbable creature of the Law — would be sufficient to touch that ghastly man.

On the other hand, they could not leave him alone. They could not go away. They watched. They saw the damp, lather-soaked beard of that victimized stranger falling away, stroke by stroke of the flashing, heavy razor. The dead denuded by the blind!

It was seen that Boaz was about to speak. It was something important he was about to utter; something, one

would say, fatal. The words would not come all at once. They swelled his cheeks out. His razor was arrested. Lifting his face, he encircled the watchers with a gaze at once of imploration and of command. As if he could see them. As if he could read his answer in the expressions of their faces.

"Tell me one thing now. Is it that *cachorra?*"

For the first time those men in the room made sounds. They shuffled their feet. It was as if an uncontrollable impulse to ejaculation, laughter, derision, forbidden by the presence of death, had gone down into their boot-soles.

"Manuel?" one of them said. "You mean *Manuel?*"

Boaz laid the razor down on the floor beside its work. He got up from his knees slowly, as if his joints hurt. He sat down in his chair, rested his hands on the arms, and once more encircled the company with his sightless gaze.

"Not Manuel. Manuel was a good boy. But tell me now, is it that *cachorra?*"

Here was something out of their calculations; something for them, mentally, to chew on. Mystification is a good thing sometimes. It gives the brain a fillip, stirs memory, puts the gears of imagination into mesh. One man, an old, tobacco-chewing fellow, began to stare harder at the face on the floor. Something moved in his intellect.

"No, but look here now ——"

He had even stopped chewing. But he was forestalled by another. "Say, now, if it don't look like that fellow Wood, himself. The bank fellow — that was burned — remember? Himself."

"That *cachorra* was not burned. Not that Wood. You fool."

Boaz spoke from his chair. They hardly knew his voice, emerging from its long silence; it was so didactic and arid.

"That *cachorra* was not burned. It was my boy that was burned. It was that *cachorra* called my boy upstairs. That *cachorra* put his clothes on my boy, and he set my

house on fire. I knew that all the time. Because when I heard those feet come out of my house and go away, I knew they were the feet of that *cachorra* from the bank. I did not know where he was going to. Something said to me — you better ask him where he is going to. But then I said, you are foolish. He had the money from the bank. I did not know. And then my house was on fire. No, it was not my boy that went away; it was that *cachorra* all the time. You fools! Did you think I was waiting for my own boy?

"Now I show you all," he said at the end. "And now I can get hanged."

No one ever touched Boaz Negro for that murder. For murder it was in the eyes and letter of the Law. The Law in a small town is sometimes a curious creature; it is sometimes blind only in one eye.

Their minds and imaginations in that town were arrested by the romantic proportions of the act. Simply, no one took it up. I believe the man, Wood, was understood to have died from heart-failure.

When they asked Boaz why he had not told what he knew as to the identity of that fugitive in the night, he seemed to find it hard to say exactly. How could a man of no education define for them his own but half-defined misgivings about the Law, his sense of oppression, constraint, and awe, of being on the defensive, even, in an abject way, his skepticism? About his wanting, come what might, to "keep clear of the Law"?

He did say this, "You would have laughed at me."

And this, "If I told folk it was Wood went away, then I say he would not dare come back again."

That was the last. Very shortly he began to refuse to talk about the thing at all. The act was completed. Like the creature of fable, it had consumed itself. Out of that old man's consciousness it had departed. Amazingly. Like a dream dreamed out.

Slowly at first, in a makeshift, piece-at-a-time, poor

man's way, Boaz commenced to rebuild his house. That "eyesore" vanished.

And slowly at first, like the miracle of a green shoot pressing out from the dead earth, that priceless and unquenchable exuberance of the man was seen returning. Unquenchable, after all.

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

In 1921 the O. Henry Memorial Committee asked for an appropriation from the Society of Arts and Sciences "as a prize to be awarded on account of general excellence in the short story in 1919, 1920, and 1921." This prize went to Wilbur Daniel Steele, who had been represented in the first three volumes of the O. Henry Memorial collections. Mr. Steele was born at Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1886. When a child he moved with his family to Colorado, where in 1907 he was graduated from the University of Denver. The next two years he spent in the study of art, first in Boston at the Museum of Fine Arts and later in Paris. His first volume, a novel *Storm*, was published in 1914. Many of his later stories have as their setting the coast of New England with its new population of Portuguese settlers from the Azores. Mr. Steele lives at Nantucket, Massachusetts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What do you think of the title of this story? Where do we first learn of Boaz's unusual ability in recognizing footsteps? Why is this mentioned early in the story?
2. Note how the character of Boaz dominates and unifies this story. The contrast between his blindness and his exuberance heightens this effect. What is the effect in the story of the contrast between Boaz and his son Manuel? How does the blindness of Boaz contribute to the dramatic effect throughout the story? Note how the merrymaking in the street intensifies by contrast the scene in the shop when Wood returns.
3. This story is an excellent example of the use of suspense. Note how the first short paragraph prepares us for tragedy. Point out other sentences, phrases, or paragraphs which definitely contribute to the suspense. How are the incidents in the plot worked out to arouse suspense? This is

also a story of atmosphere. We feel a sense of something about to happen, seeming almost to have "the blind man's eyes, the ears." Note also the effect of the wind in creating atmosphere.

4. When a murder is to be committed either upon the stage or in fiction, the author is usually careful not to make us sympathize too deeply with the victim. Is this true in the case of Manuel? In a mystery or detective story the clues usually point at the beginning to the wrong person. Point out specific ways in which the author misleads us as to Manuel's guilt. Were you surprised at Boaz's disclosure at the end? How is the use of the word *cachorra* significant in plot? How do people misunderstand Boaz's use of this word?
5. Re-read the story noting carefully everything that is said of Wood. Do you like him at first? How does Boaz come to hate him? When the sack of coins falls to the floor, Wood feels called upon to make some explanation. Note how the author does this partly by direct discourse and partly in the third person. Write Wood's explanation in full as he spoke it to Boaz. Just what was his scheme for getting away with the money? The author does not tell us why Wood came back. What is your opinion? Can you use this as a subject for an original theme? Write a sketch in which you work out the reasons for his return. These words of Boaz, spoken after the fire, will give you a hint. "That *cachorra*, one day he shall come back again, in the dark night, to have a look." A possible title might be *Back to the Scene of His Crime.*
6. Read *Markheim*, by Robert Louis Stevenson. Compare the creation of suspense in that story and in *Footfalls.* Select paragraphs from each story which definitely create atmosphere.

Stories of atmosphere and mystery:

The Fall of the House of Usher — Edgar Allan Poe
The Inn of the Three Witches — Joseph Conrad
The Monkey's Paw — W. W. Jacobs
The Doomdorf Mystery — Melville Davisson Post
The Past — Ellen Glasgow
The Speckled Band — A. Conan Doyle

A MAN IN THE HOUSE

By ELSIE SINGMASTER

I

It was very seldom that visitors reached the door of the Shindledecker sisters without being heard, but one January morning this feat was performed by a mysterious creature. The sisters had risen with an unaccustomed feeling of oppression, which was probably due to the heavy supper of fresh sausage and funnel cakes, but which had in their minds a less material explanation. They had overslept, and this added to their unhappiness. Daylight had not come fully, but they had already fed the chickens and milked the cow, and carried the milk can down to the front gate, from where a neighbor took it with him to the creamery; but the hour was late for them.

"I don't know when we ate as late as seven o'clock," said Betsey as they sat at the table. Betsey was the younger and by far the larger. Her broad, plump body was dressed in soft gray, with apron and neckerchief to match, in the Mennonite fashion, and on her smooth hair was a close-fitting cap of transparent lawn with black ribbon ties which were not tied, but which hung upon her bosom. She ate slowly, and as if from a sense of duty, a long piece of sausage which she had warmed up. "I have such a weight on my heart this morning."

"I have too," confessed Tilly. Tilly was tall and stooped, and dressed in the same fashion as her sister. The two always agreed; they were more like the two halves of one being than two separate creatures. "It's very queer. I sort of shake inside when I look at the table, and the gray one" — it was thus that they alluded to their beautiful cat — "the gray one looks strange to me. Perhaps it's the thick fog; it's yet almost like night outside.

I believe it's the fog makes me feel so strange; it gets into the lungs."

"Perhaps," said Betsey. But she sighed heavily. "Now I will wash the dishes and you can sew."

"It's not yet light enough," said Tilly, moving toward the window. "But I'll get the things all laid out."

From a drawer in the old cupboard Tilly took two hand-woven baskets in which were sewing implements and multitudes of small colored scraps. The sisters were making a quilt in which several thousand tiny leaves, cut from figured calico, were to be appliquéd upon a white ground. They had left a narrow margin of white and this they were turning in, a labor which would take them many months. Tilly set a comfortable rocking-chair by each window and then turned to dry the dishes for her sister.

"It's no use to begin yet," she said with a sigh.

"No," agreed Betsey. "You have right." She, too, sighed. "I have still this great weight, Tilly. This is not for nothing."

"What do you think it means?" asked Tilly, trembling.

"Something is going to happen," declared Betsey. "You see if I'm not right. Even the gray one is uneasy."

The gray one sprang suddenly from his rug by the fireside to his rug on the chair and there lay waving his long tail. The sisters loved him dearly. When a dog occasionally chased him across their little fields, or out of their woodland at the rear, they had murder in their hearts. On such an occasion Betsey had been known to express a shocking sentiment.

"Would that all the dogs had one neck and I the ax!"

At eight o'clock the sisters sat down to their sewing, and at nine that morning something happened which Betsey had feared. They were well started on their delicate work when Tilly spoke with profound satisfaction.

"Anyhow, on such a day nobody will come to see us."

As Betsey answered with equal satisfaction, "You have right!" there was a thundering rap on the front door.

The sisters jumped out of their chairs, scattering spools and scissors far and wide. It was not merely a nervous reaction which moved them, but the necessity of protecting themselves by pulling down the shades and locking the door, which, however, they had already securely locked. Visitors came invariably to the back door — such was the custom of the neighborhood — and they were able to prepare for them. Who was this who pounded so boldly at the front? That door was opened only to carry out the dead; it was almost as though death had rapped.

"I told you so," said Betsey in a faint whisper. "I felt it. Be very quiet."

Tilly needed no warning; she was as quiet as the chairs and tables. A long time passed; the knock was repeated, then was heard no more. They waited an attack upon the rear, but none came. The clock ticked, the cat made a scratching sound with his long claws. Unable to stand, Tilly sank upon a chair.

"It's ten minutes," she said after a long time. "Don't you believe they're gone?"

Betsey made a commanding motion with her hand, then she vanished up the stairs. From a front window she could look down. She returned, trembling, and stood silently in the darkened room.

"What is it?" begged Tilly at last, in terror. "I would rather leave them know we are here than sit any more in the dark. It's an agent or some one, and we can just send them away."

Betsey raised the shade and let in the dim light.

"They're gone," she said in her deep voice.

"Who are gone?" faltered Tilly.

"I don't rightly know," confessed Betsey, in a tone of dread. "I just saw a sort of shape going down the walk toward the gate."

"Was it a man?" asked Tilly.

"I don't know. It went fast."

"What do you think it means?"

"I don't know," said Betsey. "Let us gather up our things and go on with our work. That we can do."

She sat down heavily and as she did so she looked at the cat. His green eyes glittered, his long tail waved sinuously to and fro.

"You wouldn't be any help to us in trouble," she said resentfully.

"It must have been a human being," said Tilly.

"I don't know what it was," said Betsey. "But it looked like a woman."

II

In the middle of the night the sisters lay talking. The night was bitter cold, and there were strange crackings in the old woodwork. Outside a hard-frozen crust gleamed and glittered under the moon, and the frost on the window-pane sparkled. The sisters wore flannel garments and knitted slippers and were covered by a great weight of quilts, not made of muslin with designs appliquéd for ornament, but of heavy woolen materials. The clothing of their ancestors for three generations rested upon Betsey and Tilly, all in blacks and browns and grays of fine quality. Only in the gay and fantastic stitches which bound the pieces together had natural human desires expressed themselves.

"We'll get early up," said Tilly. "I feel that to-morrow will be a good day for work."

"It will," said Betsey.

"I hope the gray one is warm," said Tilly.

"I hope everything is warm," said Betsey benevolently. "It will give a cold day to-morrow."

"Yes," said Tilly. "You have right."

"Whoever she was, she never came back," said Betsey. The sisters had decided that it was a woman who rapped so hard on their door on the misty morning.

"I guess she decided to mind her own business, wherever she is," said Tilly.

"Yes," said Betsey. "Now we will sleep."

"Yes," said Tilly. "But listen!" Tilly laid her hand upon her sister's arm. "I hear a noise like scratching!"

"It's the cat."

"It's louder than the cat."

"What is it then?"

"Listen!"

Betsey raised herself on her elbow.

Tilly was already sitting up, her nightcap pushed back over her ears. There was a sound as of sharp claws scratching on wood.

"The gray one," said Betsey. "Lie down."

"Those are longer and stronger than a cat's claws," said Tilly. "It's outside the kitchen door. It ——"

Tilly interrupted her own sentence with a loud scream. Something had leaped upon the bed. They flung themselves backward in an agony of fright and drew the coats and suits and dresses of many ancestors over them. But it availed nothing. The creature advanced, walked upon them, up the thickly covered leg of Tilly, upon the mountainous thigh of Betsey. It advanced toward Betsey's shoulders, wailing as it went.

"It's the gray one!" said Tilly hysterically from beneath the smother of clothes. "I believe it's all the time the gray one!"

Betsey was the braver of the two; her exploring hand touched a cold, wet nose and soft fur. It was the gray one.

"Shame on you!" she cried. "Shame on you! Such a thing you never did in your life. What ails you?"

With a little whimper the cat crept in between them. His body quivered like his voice.

"Listen!" said Tilly.

The scratching sound was louder, and it was accompanied by a sort of echo of the whimper in the bed.

"It's yet there, whatever it is," wailed Tilly.

"It cannot get in," said Betsey.

"Perhaps it's a wild beast," said Tilly. "It has come

out of the woods and it was after the gray one. Perhaps it smells human flesh now." Tilly's voice squeaked. "Oh, what shall we do?"

"It can't do us anything," said Betsey reassuringly, yet with deep concern. "The cow and the chickens are locked up safe, and we're locked up, and if we cannot get out in the morning and the milk is not in its place Herr will come in to see what's wrong."

"I wish we had a gun," said Tilly. "Will we have to lie here like this all night long?"

Suddenly Betsey made a heroic resolve, and without giving it time to weaken she sprang out and walked to the window. Frost did not quite cover it, and she looked into the brilliant night. "Oh!" whispered Tilly. "Oh!"

"It's walking back toward the woods," announced Betsey. "It's like a large dog."

"No dog can live by us," said Tilly. "Is it just one?"

"Yes," answered Betsey. "That's all, anyhow, that I can see."

"We can't have any dog here," said Tilly. "That's sure."

"Yes," said Betsey, climbing back into bed. "It's very, very cold. Now I hope we can sleep."

"Yes," said Tilly. "I'm glad the gray one is here by us."

"Good-night," said Betsey firmly.

"Good-night," said Tilly.

III

The morning was crisp, but not cold. The snow was gone, the day had appreciably brightened, the geraniums in the window bloomed with a vigor which seemed to belong to the spring. The chickens were fed, the cow milked, the can carried to the gate, the breakfast eaten, the dishes washed, and the sisters sat turning in the edges of the little leaves. They did not look well. Betsey's broad face was pale and Tilly's shoulders appeared to have bent over

another inch. They had lost sleep. The dreadful creature which scratched on their door would give them no rest. He came nightly and he had added a low, continual whining to his scratching. Betsey had bravely looked down upon him from the window and had described him to her sister.

"He's a big, homely one. His hair stands out like wire and his tail is cut off. I believe he was in a fight."

"I guess he was chased off from wherever he lived," said Tilly.

"He has a sort of long chin," Betsey went on; "a very long chin. When you see him from the side it is as if you tried to make a picture of him and got it out of shape."

"I guess he has had many blows," said Tilly.

"Why he don't go somewhere else I cannot see," said Betsey. "There are places where they like dogs."

"We do not like them here," said Tilly. "Do we?" She addressed the gray cat on his throne. He responded with a wave of his tail and a glitter of his green eyes.

Betsey rose and left her chair and opened the door into the cold front hall.

"I will get me the little stool to put my feet on," she explained. She closed the door behind her so that no heat should escape, and as the sound died away Tilly leaped up. She heard Betsey's steps in the hall and other steps outside. There was no time to get to door or window. Heaven send the door was locked! She dived under the table.

"Tap-tap-tap!" came a brisk knock at the outer door. "Creak!" went the inner door as Betsey opened it. She saw Tilly's feet and she meant to step back. Surely the door was locked! Then she saw a woman's face pressed against the pane. This was, she believed, the same woman who had vanished into the mist; perhaps someone had told her to go to the back door. Betsey stood motionless and staring.

The woman's black eyes were going round and round,

from the carpet on the floor to the old cupboard and the pink luster ware on the shelf. She realized at last that there was a large body by the inner door and that it was human. She tapped upon the pane.

"What do you want?" asked Betsey, her eyes upon Tilly's feet.

"I wanted to see if I could get board here," said a sharp voice which seemed to try to be pleasant.

"We don't take boarders," said Betsey.

"Wouldn't you take me for a few weeks?"

"Why, no," said Betsey.

"May I use your telephone?"

"We have no telephone," said Betsey.

The whole neighborhood would have laughed. The Shindledecker sisters would have used a telephone about as soon as an airplane.

The stranger's face was pressed against the pane, but her stretched-out hand was on the latch. Betsey saw the latch move, but it moved only a little.

"Tilly," she said in a low tone, "you stay where you are, but pull in your feet. I will go in the front of the house and just wait until she goes. Then I will come and tell you."

Moving with the stateliness of a great ship, Betsey stepped back into the cold hall from which she had emerged. It was a simple and dignified method of dismissal. She remained perfectly still until she guessed that ten minutes had passed, then she looked out through the crack. The woman stood with her face against the pane, her eyes going round and round. They were hungry eyes. What on earth did she want? Suddenly she turned away, and through the side lights of the front door Betsey saw her pass through the front gate.

"Get up, sister," she said, returning to the kitchen. She pulled down the shades on the porch. "I will make me a little bitter tea to keep off the cold."

"What did she want?" asked Tilly, moving herself out

from under the table in a sitting posture. "I'm stiff as stiff. What did she want?"

"I think she's a little off," said Betsey.

"You are shivering," cried Tilly in alarm. "I will make the tea. You sit down and wrap the shawl round you. What are we to do?"

"I do not know," said Betsey. "Neither night nor day do we have any peace. Now look what is coming!"

From the woodland behind them advanced a large Airedale dog. Betsey had described him accurately; his hair was like wire, his tail had been cut off, his head was shaped like that of an old man with a long, long chin. But Betsey had not described his eyes, which were like soft, bright lamps; nor his teeth, which were like gleaming ivory; nor the motion of his tail, which was unceasing and regular, like part of a machine. He was very thin, but he was not uncheerful.

"He never came before in daytime!" wailed Tilly. "Look at him! How he glares at us!"

Betsey lifted the window. It was a safe distance above the ground, and she was careful not to open it far enough for the dog to leap in.

"I want you to go away," she said. "We have no room for you here. You may be all right in your own place. Besides, we do not like dogs."

It was with some difficulty that Betsey's kind heart delivered this final insult. The sight of her and the sound of her voice seemed to drive the creature out of his wits. He jumped toward the window, but she got it shut in time and he raced to the side door, barking like mad. Tilly sat down, teapot in hand.

"What will we do, sister?"

"I do not know," said Betsey. "I'm sure I do not know." She turned suddenly and looked at the cat on his chair. "I wish you were some good," she said a little bitterly. "You have teeth and claws. Some cats would not let such a dog come round." Then Betsey toyed with

a thought which was, to say the least, unmaidenly; in her calmer moments it would have seemed almost indecent. "Sometimes it seems as if it ought to be a man in every house."

IV

March was a snowy month and the light was often dim, but the porch shades were kept down. Betsey had found an old bolt in the barn and this she had added to the ancient and mighty lock on the door. Indifferent to their wishes, which had now been clearly stated to him, their nocturnal visitor continued his calls; but they could not stay awake all night to be afraid. They believed he slept on the cold porch and that made them uneasy.

"Even if he's a dog, he has feelings. I wish he would go in some warm place," said Betsey as they sat sewing.

"I wish he'd go altogether away from us," said Tilly. "I don't care where he goes from here. There are plenty of places where he can get warm. I just wonder where that woman is."

"She looked like an outlander," said Betsey. "I wonder is it true that they eat rats? She seemed like a learned woman, she spoke so proudlike."

"'*Je gelehrter, je verkehrter,*'" quoted Tilly. "'The more learned the more perverse.' I do not trust any of them. I——"

"Rap-rap-rap!" echoed on the door. The sisters became motionless.

"Oh, please let me in!" said a pleading voice.

"It's her," said Tilly.

"I'm not well," said the pleading voice. "I must have help!" It was as pathetic as the voice of Cathy Linton crying in the night,[1] "Oh, please, let me in!"

To the authentic appeal of anguish no Shindledecker was deaf. Promptly, though in desperation, Betsey un-

[1] Reference to a scene in *Wuthering Heights*, a novel by Emily Brontë. The ghost of Cathy Linton sobs at the window, "Let me in — let me in!"

did the bolt and then turned the ponderous hand-wrought key. It was the woman who had twice visited them. She was inside before one could draw breath, and she sat down on the cat's cushioned chair, her eyes going round and round.

"I was passing and I was taken with a sort of faintness. May I sit here a while?"

"Yes," said Betsey. Hospitality and concern struggled with distrust and won. "Shall I make you a little tea? It's good for such feelings."

"How kind you are," said the stranger, her eyes going round and round. "It would certainly revive me."

"It will take only a few minutes. The water boils already."

Betsey put a large portion of the bitter thoroughwort into the pot — large because there was little time for brewing. She meant to get this woman revived quickly. To her guest tea meant English breakfast or orange pekoe; she had never heard of *durchwax* and *quental*.[1]

"What beautiful things you have!" she said, her eyes still going round and round.

"They are all old," said Betsey. "We have nothing new, except we sometimes make new quilts."

She was proud of her skill and that of Tilly, and she showed a little leaf and explained how there would be thousands of them. Meanwhile the stranger's eyes still went round and round. They paused upon the old walnut cupboard and lingered upon the luster ware on the mantel-shelf and flitted over the rocker with the Dutch roll and sparkled with a sort of bright horror at the sight of the old glass dish from which the gray one lapped his drinking water.

"Are all your things old?" she asked.

"Yes," said Betsey. "Old beds and old bureaus —

[1] Names used by the Pennsylvania Dutch for thoroughwort and wild thyme. These are medicinal herbs popular as household remedies and taken in the form of tea.

everything old." She spoke as though she were ashamed of her things; she was determined to show this stranger that they had nothing in common with her prosperity. "They are only fit to be thrown out."

"Would you exchange this cupboard for a kitchen cabinet, all fitted out?" asked the stranger. She tried to speak lightly, casually, indifferently. "I know some one who likes old things, and I believe he'd be foolish enough to exchange." Greedy and excited, she looked round and round. "He has a fancy for all sorts of old things — jugs like that, for instance. If I could get him to give you other jugs in exchange, would you do it?"

Betsey came forward with the steaming brew.

"It might be," she said politely. "Here; this will make you feel good. I put a little cold water in; it's not too hot."

In her excitement the stranger did not notice the odor, pungent as it was. She took a large swallow and an expression of agony came over her face. She believed she would be turned inside out and sit a woman reversed before their eyes. But she was not disconcerted even by this misadventure.

"I feel better," she said, rising and setting the cup down. "I must go."

She thanked them and went away and Betsey locked the door.

"Do you think she liked our old things?" asked Tilly.

"No," said Betsey. "That was put on."

"Do you think she felt bad?" asked Tilly.

"I don't like to think she would lie," said Betsey.

"Do you think she'll come back?" asked Tilly.

"I don't know," said Betsey. "I think she's a little queer, and you can't tell about such people. Oh, how I wish they would leave us alone."

V

In the evening the sisters went to prayer meeting. The little meeting-house stood just across the road and they

never missed a service. William Hershey, a faithful member, came early and started the fire and lit the two coal-oil lamps, and they went over at once. This evening there was a large attendance. William had brought his little wife and his three children in his buggy, little Amos sitting between them, little David on a stool on the floor and the baby in her mother's arms. William was a most devout and cheerful soul; it was good to be in his company. In addition, there were three others, Eleazer Herr, Lucy Erlenbaugh and John Steckbeck. Lucy Erlenbaugh was not cheerful; she was seen to weep through the service, and when William had concluded his final prayer they all turned to inquire her trouble and comfort her.

"It's my grandmother's clock," she sobbed.

"What?" said William, thinking she was losing her mind. "Why do you cry about your grandmother's clock, Lucy? Has it stopped?"

"It has gone away," explained Lucy. "A woman came and she bewitched me and took it away."

"Not bewitched you," corrected William. "There is no such thing."

William held this bold and advanced opinion in defiance of his friends.

"She hypnotized me," said Lucy. "She brought me a new clock instead with chimes and I took it. When I saw the old one going down the road I could of screamed. But she took it in an automobile and it's gone. She got my old settee that my gran'pop made. Oh, they will turn in their graves."

"It's too bad," said William. "What did she give you instead?"

"A rocker with a spring," wept Lucy. "I already put my fingers down the side and pinched them. I hate it."

"Was she a good-sized woman?" asked Betsey. "Tall, with black eyes and sort of mourning spectacles?"

"Yes," said Lucy. "Was she by you?"

"Yes," said Betsey.

"She'll take your things. She's so smooth-spoken you don't know what you're doing."

"I'll know what I am doing," said Betsey firmly. But she was filled with fear. She took Tilly by the arm. "Come," she said; "come quickly."

The house was as they had left it, lovely in the moonlight.

"I believe she would do anything," declared Betsey. "It's not safe to go off."

"Not to meeting?" said Tilly, astonished.

"No, nor to bed," said Betsey. "I thought I was all the time discouraging her, but I was leading her on. She does want old things — for what, heaven knows. She will surely come back. I'm going to sleep here on the settee."

"Your bones will wear through!" protested Tilly.

"I don't care," was the grim response. "Better that than she should get our things."

"The dog might scratch through!" cried Tilly, aghast.

"I would rather be eaten by him than that she should get our things," declared Betsey.

VI

The March twilight, late as it was, fell before Betsey painfully completed her milking. Tilly had a cold and she had not gone with her. Tilly had caught the cold creeping from her warm bed down to the kitchen to see that Betsey was safe, and Betsey was stiff because of the hardness of the boards upon which she lay. The settee was narrow and she was broad; she had not been able to shift her position all night long for four nights. There had been no scratching outside; the lazy purring of the gray one and the little whispers in the stove were all that broke the quiet. The gray one purred as though he thought Betsey endured this misery to keep him company. The dog had gone, probably for good. Betsey was certain he was not there, because once or twice in each night she

had gone to the door and made upon it, low down, a scratching sound with her own fingers. There had been no response, but she was clearly not quite reassured as she went back to her hard couch, for she looked vaguely disappointed and unhappy.

As she sat on her milking stool, her forehead laid affectionately against the comfortable side of her cow, a shadow fell upon her and she looked up. A figure stood in the doorway; against the dim sky it appeared gigantic. It wore a long cape which made it appear shapeless. Betsey sat paralyzed. A hand reached out from the formless mass and seized hold of the key of the barn door, a very ancient and remarkable key which wound and unwound.

"How extraordinary!" said a voice which Betsey recognized at once. Still paralyzed, she did not respond.

"And look at the hinges," said another voice. "You've struck it this time, Cora."

Betsey discerned a second figure behind the first. The cow touched the pail with her foot.

"Is anybody in here?" asked Cora's familiar voice.

"I'm here," said Betsey.

"I have brought my friend to see your things." Honey seemed to drip into the still cold air. "You're willing, I know. You were so kind to me."

Betsey lifted her pail and came out into the brighter light. The second figure, which was that of a man, stepped forward.

"Let me carry it for you." Honey dripped again.

"No, thank you," said Betsey. "I can carry it."

A lump came into her throat. She was outside her house and she would have to go in, and they would go in with her. The sun had set, but its light shone suddenly up against a cloud, and the world brightened. She could see at the gate an automobile and behind it a truck. In it were large objects; one might be a kitchen cabinet, others bureaus with swinging mirrors. She staggered a little

and the stranger put out his hand again and spoke in accents of learning and refinement, also in the accents of a great desire.

"You must let me carry it, madam."

The milk pail was passing from her hand, and with it all her hopes of being able to resist, when there was a new sound, not at all honeyed, in the still air. Something moved at the corner of the barn and a dog came and stood by Betsey. His wirelike hair stood on end, his stump of a tail stood straight out, his white teeth showed.

"Is this your dog?" said the man quickly.

"Is he cross?" asked the woman with a little break in her voice.

Betsey answered the second question.

"I'm afraid he's very cross," she said.

The stranger seized her pail firmly, as if to hasten their entry into the safe house. The dog came forward and again he spoke, this time more loudly.

"Now, Ponto!" remonstrated the strange woman called Cora.

If Betsey had had breath, she would have said "We must run, he will eat us!" But she had no breath. Her mind still worked, however, and she heard and understood an astonishing remark uttered by the man.

"He thinks he must defend you from us. I guess I'd better let you have the pail."

While they moved along, Betsey's mind continued to work. The dog stepped close beside her; she could hear him breathe and feel his body.

"Is he very cross?" asked the woman, hesitating at the porch step.

"Yes," said Betsey positively and with a slightly dull tongue; "wery, wery cross."

"He won't object to our coming in, surely, if you are with us?" said the man.

"Oh!" cried Betsey as if in a passion of mortification and embarrassment. "Oh, I would be afraid for you to

come in. His teeth are very sharp; he has clawed the door almost through."

As if to emphasize her remark, the dog uttered a growl which shook her very bones.

"You oughtn't to keep such a dog," said the man, a little impatiently. He had taken at least four steps away from the porch.

"We will come by daylight," said the woman determinedly. She, too, was moving down the walk. "We'll go now, but we'll come again."

Betsey made no polite response; the amenities of civilization were not, of course, understood in this lonely and benighted community.

"Perhaps you'd better go with us to the gate," said the man nervously. "You know, you're responsible for a savage dog."

"Oh, you won't hurt us, will you, Ponto?"

Cora apparently meant to depart with dignity and in a spirit which would make a return possible, but there were frightened runs and trills in her voice.

Suddenly great courage and a great calm spread through the mind and soul of Betsey.

"He will stay by me," she said. She gave the dog a queer name, but one which was common in the neighborhood. "You stay by me, Whisky." She felt him against her and a thrill went through her whole body. The thrill was transformed into a sort of mischief. "Go quick, though."

VII

Betsey and Tilly sat up late, beside the beautiful and ancient kitchen table. Before them was a square of wood measuring about two by three feet which had once been the lid of a box. Tilly, as artist, was putting words upon it. They had a little black paint, and fortunately the lid was white. Their cheeks were red, their hands trembled, and occasionally they exchanged a troubled sentence.

The gray one also seemed to be troubled. He lay upon his cushioned chair, moving his tail, and now and then uttering an angry miaow.

"'Cross' is a *leppish*" — insipid — "word for this," said Betsey.

"But 'savage' is such a bad word," said Tilly. "Herr, he might be afraid to stop for the can."

"We will tell him, of course. But I believe there's yet a better word."

Various problems were discussed and settled; but for the most part Tilly worked intently. Presently a subject was opened which brought a brighter flush to their cheeks.

"It was all the time that he liked us!" said Tilly as if incredulously. "That was why he came."

"There's one thing I'm glad of," said Betsey. "That is, we had such good, fresh sausage to give him."

"Do you think he will be willing to eat all the time pork?" asked Tilly solicitously.

"No," said Betsey. "I thought of that. There's something you can buy called dog cake. William Hershey will get us some of that in the store."

"I wonder if he's yet out there."

As if in answer there came a little scratching.

"I know what he wants," said Tilly timidly. She turned and looked at the cat in a humble way.

"What good did that one ever do us?" said Betsey grimly. "Are you done?"

"Yes," said Tilly, with an excited gasp. "You're not going to put it up to-night, though?"

"I am," said Betsey. "It'll stand on the fence rail and lean against the tree. If they come in the early morning they'll see it. I'll not smear it. To-morrow when it's dry I'll nail it up."

As if excited by the motion within, the creature outside scratched gently, but with a determination like that of a terrier after a mole.

Betsey held up the sign. The Shindledeckers sewed ex-

quisitely, but they were not expert spellers. The lettering, however, was not bad, though the letter S was reversed.

"You're sure you're not afraid?" asked Tilly in uneasy admiration.

"Sure."

Betsey lifted the sign and Tilly opened the door. It was touching to see with what eager affection their guest and protector regarded them. Eyes were a-shine, teeth a-grin, tail a-bob.

"Come on," said Betsey, stepping out on the porch and off.

The dog uttered a whine of joy and gamboled beside her down the path. It was as she had anticipated; she could place the sign securely on the crossbar of the paling fence and lean it against the tree. It scarcely needed to be nailed. In the moonlight the words were plain and she read it with satisfaction — before she went with her dignified rocking step up toward the house. It said:

BEWAIR
THE ANGRY DOG
ADWISE
DO NOT COME IN

Back on the porch she stood still. Tilly waited in the doorway, shivering in her shawl. Within, the gray one stood on his throne, aghast, his back arched in a narrow parabolic curve. Without, were the eager eyes, the shining teeth, the palpitating tail. These Betsey addressed, very humbly, a little fearfully, but more hopefully than fearfully. The amenities of polite society were, after all, not unknown.

"Will you come once in," she said, trembling, "and sit a little while by us?"

The dog walked in; he grinned with the rapture of a

patient lover surprised by a bliss in which he had never dared to believe; there was something about him at once human and delightfully idiotic. The gray one abdicated. Ascending as on wings, he sat among the luster ware on the mantel. To him the new arrival paid no heed; uttering a long sigh, he lay down before the stove. There was a little silence as the sisters returned to their multitudinous leaves.

"They say dogs bathe themselves in summer," remarked Tilly, a little absentmindedly. "He will doubtless bathe himself back in the pond." Then, as if she had said something a little impolite, she hastened to add, "He is fine company. He will take care of us. We have now a man in the house."

"He is better than a man," said Betsey with conviction. "He takes up less room, and he cannot talk and he will do as he's told." Suddenly a grimly humorous expression brightened her soft eyes. "I don't believe any man would bite that Cora, but he would bite her in a minute. *Ach*, how I shall sleep to-night!"

ELSIE SINGMASTER

ELSIE SINGMASTER LEWARS, who writes under her maiden name, is a Pennsylvanian by birth and residence. Most of her early life was spent in Lehigh County where she acquired a knowledge of the Pennsylvania Germans which formed the basis for her first literary work. She was a student first at Cornell, then at Radcliffe, and was graduated from the latter institution in 1907.

For twenty-five years she has lived in Gettysburg, and the battlefield with its stirring history has furnished her with many themes. She has published stories in the *Century*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *Outlook*, *Pictorial Review*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and other magazines. In addition five novels, various books for young people, a volume of short stories, and one of biography make up her list of published works. Her last novel, *Keller's Anna Ruth*, was published in March, 1926. The Shindledecker Sisters, to whom you are introduced in

A Man in the House, are the center of interest in many of her latest short stories.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. How soon in the story do you realize the significance of the title? How do the concluding sentences justify the choice of the title?
2. Often in real life chance remarks betray character or give a glimpse into the life of the speaker. With this thought in mind find the context of these remarks and discuss their significance:
   a. "I don't know when we ate so late as seven o'clock."
   b. "I don't like to think she would lie."
   c. "Not to meeting?" said Tilly.
   d. "I don't believe any man would bite that Cora."
   e. "No dog can live by us."
   f. "They say dogs bathe themselves in summer."
3. Note that the description of the dog is not concentrated in any one paragraph. Find and read aloud in class, words, phrases, or sentences which describe him. When all details are thus brought together, do you seem actually to see the dog? What is his breed?
4. How do Betsey and Tilly differ in character? Find definite passages in which this difference is suggested. Why does Betsey look "vaguely disappointed and unhappy" when she goes to the door at night and finds the dog not there? Trace the change in attitude towards dogs from Betsey's, "Would that all dogs had one neck and I the ax!" to Tilly's, "We have now a man in the house." What reason does Betsey give for pronouncing Whisky "better than a man"?
5. Read *The Gala Dress*, by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and compare it with this story. Both stories center about two elderly women living alone but in very different sections of the country. Reconstruct and compare the social backgrounds suggested in the two stories. Which story is the more humorous? In each story a third person is essential to the plot. Show how this is true. Compare the style of the two authors. How do the two stories differ entirely in theme?

6. For good stories by Elsie Singmaster watch the current magazines. These of her stories are especially recommended:

The Courier of the Czar
A Lear in Shireman's Gass
November the Nineteenth
Salt of the Earth
Amishman
Little and Unknown
Sound in the Night
Zion Valley

THE HEART OF LITTLE SHIKARA

By EDISON MARSHALL

I

If it hadn't been for a purple moon that came peering up above the dark jungle just at nightfall, it would have been impossible to tell that Little Shikara was at his watch. He was really just the color of the shadows — a rather pleasant brown — he was very little indeed, and besides, he was standing very, very still. If he was trembling at all, from anticipation and excitement, it was no more than Nahar the tiger trembles as he crouches in ambush. But the moon did show him — peering down through the leaf-clusters of the heavy vines — and shone very softly in his wide-open dark eyes.

And it was a purple moon — no other color that man could name. It looked almost unreal, like a paper moon painted very badly by a clumsy stage-hand. The jungle-moon quite often has that peculiar purplish tint, most travelers know, but few of them indeed ever try to tell what causes it. This particular moon probed down here and there between the tall bamboos, transformed the jungle — just now waking — into a mystery and a fairy-land, glinted on a hard-packed elephant trail that wound away into the thickets, and always came back to shine on the coal-black Oriental eyes of the little boy beside the village gate. It showed him standing very straight and just as tall as his small stature would permit, and looked oddly silvery and strange on his long, dark hair. Little Shikara, son of Khoda Dunnoo, was waiting for the return of a certain idol and demigod who was even now riding home in his *howdah* from the tiger hunt.

Other of the villagers would be down to meet Warwick Sahib as soon as they heard the shouts of his beaters —

but Little Shikara had been waiting almost an hour. Likely, if they had known about it, they would have commented on his badness, because he was notoriously bad, if indeed — as the villagers told each other — he was not actually cursed with evil spirits.

In the first place, he was almost valueless as a herder of buffalo. Three times, when he had been sent with the other boys to watch the herds in their wallows, he had left his post and crept away into the fringe of jungle on what was unquestionably some mission of witchcraft. For small naked brown boys, as a rule, do not go alone and unarmed into the thick bamboos. Too many things can happen to prevent their ever coming out again; too many brown silent ribbons crawl in the grass, or too many yellow, striped creatures, no less lithe, lurk in the thickets. But the strangest thing of all — and the surest sign of witchcraft — was that he had always come safely out again, yet with never any satisfactory explanations as to why he had gone. He had always looked some way very joyful and tremulous — and perhaps even pale if from the nature of things a brown boy ever can look pale. But it was the kind of paleness that one has after a particularly exquisite experience. It was not the dumb, teeth-chattering paleness of fear.

"I saw the sergeant of the jungle," Little Shikara said after one of these excursions. And this made no sense at all.

"There are none of the King's soldiers here," the brown village folk replied to him. "Either thou liest to us, or thine eyes lied to thee. And didst thou also see the chevron that told his rank?"

"That was the way I knew him. It was the black bear, and he wore the pale chevron low on his throat."

This was Little Shikara all over. Of course he referred to the black Himalayan bear which all men know wears a yellowish patch, of chevron shape, just in front of his fore legs; but why he should call him a jungle-sergeant was quite

beyond the wit of the village folk to say. Their imagination did not run in that direction. It never even occurred to them that Little Shikara might be a born jungle creature, expatriated by the accident of birth — one of that free, strange breed that can never find peace in the villages of men.

"But remember the name we gave him," his mother would say. "Perhaps he is only living up to his name."

For there are certain native hunters in India that are known, far and wide, as the Shikaris; and possibly she meant in her tolerance that her little son was merely a born huntsman. But in reality Little Shikara was not named for these men at all. Rather it was for a certain fleet-winged little hawk, a hunter of sparrows, that is one of the most free spirits in all the jungle.

And it was almost like taking part in some great hunt himself — to be waiting at the gate for the return of Warwick Sahib. Even now, the elephant came striding out of the shadows; and Little Shikara could see the trophy. The hunt had indeed been successful, and the boy's glowing eyes beheld — even in the shadows — the largest, most beautiful tigerskin he had ever seen. It was the great Nahar, the royal tiger, who had killed one hundred cattle from near-by fields.

Warwick Sahib rode in his *howdah*, and he did not seem to see the village people that came out to meet him. In truth, he seemed half asleep, his muscles limp, his gray eyes full of thoughts. He made no answer to the triumphant shouts of the village folk. Little Shikara glanced once at the lean, bronzed face, the limp, white, thin hands, and something like a shiver of ecstasy went clear to his ten toes. For like many other small boys, all over the broad world, he was a hero-worshiper to the last hair of his head; and this quiet man on the elephant was to him beyond all measure the most wonderful living creature on the earth.

He didn't cry out, as the others did. He simply stood in

mute worship, his little body tingling with glory. Warwick Sahib had looked up now, and his slow eyes were sweeping the line of brown faces. But still he did not seem to see them. And then — wonder of wonders — his eyes rested full on the eyes of his little worshiper beside the gate.

But it was quite the way of Warwick Sahib to sweep his gray, tired-out eyes over a scene and seemingly perceive nothing; yet in reality absorbing every detail with the accuracy of a photographic plate. And his seeming indifference was not a pose with him, either. He was just a great sportsman who was also an English gentleman, and he had learned certain lessons of impassiveness from the wild. Only one of the brown faces he beheld was worth a lingering glance. And when he met that one his eyes halted in their sweeping survey — and Warwick Sahib smiled.

That face was the brown, eager visage of Little Shikara. And the blood of the boy flowed to the skin, and he glowed red all over through the brown.

It was only the faintest of quiet, tolerant smiles; but it meant more to him than almost any kind of honor could have meant to the prematurely gray man in the *howdah*. The latter passed on to his estate, and some of the villagers went back to their women and their thatch huts. But still Little Shikara stood motionless — and it wasn't until the thought suddenly came to him that possibly the beaters had already gathered and were telling the story of the kill that with startling suddenness he raced back through the gates to the village.

Yes, the beaters had assembled in a circle under a tree, and most of the villagers had gathered to hear the story. He slipped in among them, and listened with both outstanding little ears. Warwick Sahib had dismounted from his elephant as usual, the beaters said, and with but one attendant had advanced up the bed of a dry creek. This was quite like Warwick Sahib, and Little Shikara felt him-

self tingling again. Other hunters, particularly many of the rich sahibs from across the sea, shot their tigers from the security of the *howdah;* but this wasn't Warwick's way of doing. The male tiger had risen snarling from his lair, and had been felled at the first shot.

Most of the villagers had supposed that the story would end at this point. Warwick Sahib's tiger hunts were usually just such simple and expeditious affairs. The gun would lift to his shoulder, the quiet eyes would glance along the barrel — and the tiger, whether charging or standing still — would speedily die. But to-day there had been a curious epilogue. Just as the beaters had started toward the fallen animal, and the white Heaven-born's cigarette-case was open in his hand, Nahara, Nahar's great, tawny mate, had suddenly sprung forth from the bamboo thickets.

She drove straight to the nearest of the beaters. There was no time whatever for Warwick to take aim. His rifle leaped, like a live thing, in his arms, but not one of the horrified beaters had seen his eyes lower to the sights. Yet the bullet went home — they could tell by the way the tiger flashed to her breast in the grass.

Yet she was only wounded. One of the beaters, starting, had permitted a bough of a tree to whip Warwick in the face, and the blow had disturbed what little aim he had. It was almost a miracle that he had hit the great cat at all. At once the thickets had closed around her, and the beaters had been unable to drive her forth again.

The circle was silent thereafter. They seemed to be waiting for Khusru, one of the head men of the village, to give his opinion. He knew more about the wild animals than any mature native in the assembly, and his comments on the hunting stories were usually worth hearing.

"We will not be in the honored service of the Protector of the Poor at this time a year from now," he said.

They all waited tensely. Shikara shivered. "Speak, Khusru," they urged him.

"Warwick Sahib will go again to the jungles — and Nahara will be waiting. She owes two debts. One is the killing of her mate — and ye know that these two tigers have been long and faithful mates. Do ye think she will let that debt go unpaid? She will also avenge her own wound."

"Perhaps she will die of bleeding," one of the others suggested.

"Nay, or ye would have found her this afternoon. Ye know that it is the wounded tiger that is most to be feared. One day, and he will go forth in pursuit of her again; and then ye will not see him riding back so grandly on his elephant. Perhaps she will come here, to carry away *our* children."

Again Shikara tingled — hoping that Nahara would at least come close enough to cause excitement. And that night, too happy to keep silent, he told his mother of Warwick Sahib's smile. "And some time I — I, thine own son," he said as sleepiness came upon him, "will be a killer of tigers, even as Warwick Sahib."

"Little sparrow-hawk," his mother laughed at him. "Little one of mighty words, only the great sahibs that come from afar, and Warwick Sahib himself, may hunt the tiger. So how canst thou, little worthless?"

"I will soon be grown," he persisted, "and I — I, too — will some time return with such a tiger-skin as the great Heaven-born brought this afternoon." Little Shikara was very sleepy, and he was telling his dreams much more frankly than was his wont. "And the village folk will come out to meet me with shoutings, and I will tell them of the shot — in the circle under the tree."

"And where, little hawk, wilt thou procure thine elephants, and such rupees as are needed?"

"Warwick Sahib shoots from the ground — and so will I. And sometimes he goes forth with only one attendant — and I will not need even one. And who can say — perhaps he will find me even a bolder man than Gunga

Singhai; and he will take me in his place on the hunts in the jungles."

For Gunga Singhai was Warwick Sahib's own personal attendant and gun-carrier — the native that the Protector of the Poor could trust in the tightest places. So it was only to be expected that Little Shikara's mother should laugh at him. The idea of her son being an attendant of Warwick Sahib, not to mention a hunter of tigers, was only a tale to tell her husband when the boy's bright eyes were closed in sleep.

"Nay, little man," she told him. "Would I want thee torn to pieces in Nahara's claws? Would I want thee smelling of the jungle again, as thou didst after chasing the waterbuck through the bamboos? Nay — thou wilt be a herdsman, like thy father — and perhaps gather many rupees."

But Little Shikara did not want to think of rupees. Even now, as sleep came to him, his childish spirit had left the circle of thatch roofs, and had gone on tremulous expeditions into the jungle. Far away, the trumpet-call of a wild tusker trembled through the moist, hot night; and great bell-shaped flowers made the air pungent and heavy with perfume. A tigress skulked somewhere in a thicket licking an injured leg with her rough tongue, pausing to listen to every sound the night gave forth. Little Shikara whispered in his sleep.

A half mile distant, in his richly furnished bungalow, Warwick Sahib dozed over his after-dinner cigar. He was in evening clothes, and crystal and silver glittered on his board. But his gray eyes were half closed; and the gleam from his plate could not pass the long, dark lashes. For his spirit was far distant, too — on the jungle trails with that of Little Shikara.

II

One sunlit morning, perhaps a month after the skin of Nahar was brought in from the jungle, Warwick Sahib's

mail was late. It was an unheard-of thing. Always before, just as the clock struck eight, he would hear the cheerful tinkle of the postman's bells. At first he considered complaining; but as morning drew to early afternoon he began to believe that investigation would be the wiser course.

The postman's route carried him along an old elephant trail through a patch of thick jungle beside one of the tributaries of the Manipur. When natives went out to look, he was neither on the path nor drowned in the creek, nor yet in his thatched hut at the other end of his route. The truth was that this particular postman's bells would never be heard by human ears again. And there was enough evidence in the wet mould of the trail to know what had occurred.

That night the circle under the tree was silent and shivering. "Who is next?" they asked of one another. The jungle night came down, breathless and mysterious, and now and then a twig was cracked by a heavy foot at the edge of the thickets. In Warwick's house, the great Protector of the Poor took his rifles from their cases and fitted them together.

"To-morrow," he told Gunga Singhai, "we will settle for that postman's death." Singhai breathed deeply, but said nothing. Perhaps his dark eyes brightened. The tiger-hunts were nearly as great a delight to him as they were to Warwick himself.

But while Nahara, lame from Warwick's bullet, could no longer overtake cattle, she did with great skillfulness avoid the onrush of the beaters. Again Little Shikara waited at the village gate for his hero to return; but the beaters walked silently to-night. Nor were there any tales to be told under the tree.

Nahara, a fairly respectable cattle-killer before, had become in a single night one of the worst terrors of India. Of course she was still a coward, but she had learned, by virtue of a chance meeting with a postman on a trail after a week

of heart-devouring starvation, two or three extremely portentous lessons. One of them was that not even the little deer, drinking beside the Manipur, died half so easily as these tall, forked forms of which she had previously been so afraid. She found out also that they could neither run swiftly nor walk silently, and they could be approached easily even by a tiger that cracked a twig with every step. It simplified the problem of living immensely; and just as any other feline would have done, she took the line of least resistance. If there had been plenty of carrion in the jungle, Nahara might never have hunted men. But the kites and the jackals looked after the carrion; and they were much swifter and keener-eyed than a lame tiger.

She knew enough not to confine herself to one village; and it is rather hard to explain how any lower creature, that obviously cannot reason, could have possessed this knowledge. Perhaps it was because she had learned that a determined hunt, with many beaters and men on elephants, invariably followed her killings. It was always well to travel just as far as possible from the scene. She found out also that, just as a doe is easier felled than a horned buck, certain of this new kind of game were more easily taken than the others. Sometimes children played at the door of their huts, and sometimes old men were afflicted with such maladies that they could not flee at all. All these things Nahara learned; and in learning them she caused a certain civil office of the British Empire to put an exceedingly large price on her head.

Gradually the fact dawned on her that unlike the deer and the buffalo, this new game was more easily hunted in the daylight — particularly in that tired-out, careless twilight hour when the herders and the plantation hands came in from their work. At night the village folk kept in their huts, and such wood-cutters and gypsies as slept without wakened every hour to tend their fires. Nahara was deathly afraid of fire. Night after night she would creep round and round a gypsy camp, her eyes like two

pale blue moons in the darkness, and would never dare attack.

And because she was taking her living in a manner forbidden by the laws of the jungle, the glory and beauty of her youth quickly departed from her. There are no prisons for those that break the jungle laws, no courts and no appointed officers; but because these are laws that go down to the roots of life, punishment is always swift and inevitable. "Thou shalt not kill men," is the first law of the wild creatures; and everyone knows that any animal or breed of animals that breaks this law has sooner or later been hunted down and slain — just like any other murderer. The mange came upon her, and she lost flesh, and certain of her teeth began to come out. She was no longer the beautiful female of her species, to be sung to by the weaver birds as she passed beneath. She was a hag and a vampire, hatred of whom lay deep in every human heart in her hunting range.

Often the hunting was poor, and sometimes she went many days in a stretch without making a single kill. And in all beasts, high and low, this is the last step to the worst degeneracy of all. It instills a curious, terrible kind of bloodlust — to kill, not once, but as many times as possible in the same hunt; to be content not with one death, but to slay and slay until the whole herd is destroyed. It is the instinct that makes a little weasel kill all the chickens in a coop, when one was all it could possibly carry away, and that will cause a wolf to leap from sheep to sheep in a fold until every one is dead. Nahara didn't get a chance to kill every day; so when the opportunity did come, like a certain pitiable kind of human hunter who comes from afar to hunt small game, she killed as many times as she could in quick succession. And the British Empire raised the price on her head.

One afternoon found her within a half mile of Warwick's bungalow, and for five days she had gone without food. One would not have thought of her as a royal

tigress, the queen of the felines and one of the most beautiful of all living things. And since she was still tawny and graceful, it would be hard to understand why she no longer gave the impression of beauty. It was simply gone, as a flame goes, and her queenliness was wholly departed, too. In some vague way she had become a poisonous, a ghastly thing, to be named with such outcasts as the jackals or hyenas.

Excessive hunger, in most of the flesh-eating animals, is really a first cousin to madness. It brings bad dreams and visions, and, worst of all, it induces an insubordination to all the forest laws of man and beast. A well-fed wolf-pack will run in stark panic from a human being; but even the wisest of mountaineers do not care to meet the same gray band in the starving times of winter. Starvation brings recklessness, a desperate frenzied courage that is likely to upset all of one's preconceived notions as to the behavior of animals. It also brings, so that all men may be aware of its presence, a peculiar lurid glow to the balls of the eyes.

In fact, the two pale circles of fire were the most noticeable characteristics of the long, tawny cat that crept through the bamboos. Except for them, she would hardly have been discernible at all. The yellow grass made a perfect background, her black stripes looked like the streaks of shadow between the stalks of bamboo, and for one that is lame she crept with an astounding silence. One couldn't have believed that such a great creature could lie so close to the earth and be so utterly invisible in the low thickets.

A little peninsula of dwarf bamboos and tall jungle grass extended out into the pasture before the village and Nahara crept out clear to its point. She didn't seem to be moving. One couldn't catch the stir and draw of muscles. And yet she slowly glided to the end; then began to wait. Her head sunk low, her body grew tense, her tail whipped softly back and forth, with as easy a motion as the swaying

of a serpent. The light flamed and died and flamed and died again in her pale eyes.

Soon a villager who had been working in Warwick's fields came trotting in Oriental fashion across the meadow. His eyes were only human, and he did not see the tawny shape in the tall grass. If any one had told him that a full-grown tigress could have crept to such a place and still remained invisible, he would have laughed. He was going to his thatched hut, to brown wife and babies, and it was no wonder that he trotted swiftly. The muscles of the great cat bunched, and now the whipping tail began to have a little vertical motion that is the final warning of a spring.

The man was already in leaping range; but the tiger had learned, in many experiences, always to make sure. Still she crouched — a single instant in which the trotting native came two paces nearer. Then the man drew up with a gasp of fright.

For just as the clear outlines of an object that has long been concealed in a maze of light and shadow will often leap, with sudden vividness, to the eyes, the native suddenly perceived the tiger.

He caught the whole dread picture — the crouching form, the terrible blue lights of the eyes, the whipping tail. The gasp he uttered from his closing throat seemed to act like the fall of a firing-pin against a shell on the bunched muscles of the animal; and she left her covert in a streak of tawny light.

But Nahara's leaps had never been quite accurate since she had been wounded by Warwick's bullet, months before. They were usually straight enough for the general purposes of hunting, but they missed by a long way the "theoretical center of impact" of which artillery officers speak. Her lame paw always seemed to disturb her balance. By remembering it, she could usually partly overcome the disadvantage; but to-day, in the madness of her hunger, she had been unable to remember anything except

the terrible rapture of killing. This circumstance alone, however, would not have saved the native's life. Even though her fangs missed his throat, the power of the blow and her rending talons would have certainly snatched away his life as a storm snatches a leaf. But there was one other determining factor. The Burman had seen the tiger just before she leaped; and although there had been no time for conscious thought, his guardian reflexes had flung him to one side in a single frenzied effort to miss the full force of the spring.

The result of both these things was that he received only an awkward, sprawling blow from the animal's shoulder. Of course he was hurled to the ground; for no human body in the world is built to withstand the ton or so of shocking power of a three-hundred-pound cat leaping through the air. The tigress sprawled down also, and because she lighted on her wounded paw, she squealed with pain. It was possibly three seconds before she had forgotten the stabbing pain in her paw and had gathered herself to spring on the unconscious form of the native. And that three seconds gave Warwick Sahib, sitting at the window of his study, an opportunity to seize his rifle and fire.

Warwick knew tigers, and he had kept the rifle always ready for just such a need as this. The distance was nearly five hundred yards, and the bullet went wide of its mark. Nevertheless, it saved the native's life. The great cat remembered this same far-off explosion from another day, in a dry creek-bed of months before, and the sing of the bullet was a remembered thing, too. Although it would speedily return to her, her courage fled and she turned and faced into the bamboos.

In an instant, Warwick was on his great veranda, calling his beaters. Gunga Singhai, his faithful gun-carrier, slipped shells into the magazine of his master's high-calibered close-range tiger-rifle. "The elephant, Sahib?" he asked swiftly.

"Nay, this will be on foot. Make the beaters circle

about the fringe of bamboos. Thou and I will cross the eastern fields and shoot at her as she breaks through."

But there was really no time to plan a complete campaign. Even now, the first gray of twilight was blurring the sharp outlines of the jungle, and the soft jungle night was hovering, ready to descend. Warwick's plan was to cut through to a certain little creek that flowed into the river and with Singhai to continue on to the edge of the bamboos that overlooked a wide field. The beaters would prevent the tigress from turning back beyond the village, as it was at least possible that he would get a shot at her as she burst from the jungle and crossed the field to the heavier thickets beyond.

"Warwick Sahib walks into the teeth of his enemy," Khusru, the hunter, told a little group that watched from the village gate. "Nahara will collect her debts."

A little brown boy shivered at his words and wondered if the beaters would turn and kick him, as they had always done before, if he should attempt to follow them. It was the tiger-hunt, in view of his own village, and he sat down, tremulous with rapture, in the grass to watch. It was almost as if his dream — that he himself should be a hunter of tigers — was coming true. He wondered why the beaters seemed to move so slowly and with so little heart.

He would have known if he could have looked into their eyes. Each black pupil was framed with white. Human hearts grow shaken and bloodless from such sights as this they had just seen, and only the heart of a jungle creature — the heart of the eagle that the jungle gods, by some unheard-of fortune, had put in the breast of Little Shikara — could prevail against them. Besides, the superstitious Burmans thought that Warwick was walking straight to death — that the time had come for Nahara to collect her debts.

III

Warwick Sahib and Singhai disappeared at once into

the fringe of jungle, and silence immediately fell upon them. The cries of the beaters at once seemed curiously dim. It was as if no sound could live in the great silences under the arching trees. Soon it was as if they were alone.

They walked side by side, Warwick with his rifle held ready. He had no false ideas in regard to this tiger-hunt. He knew that his prey was desperate with hunger, that she had many old debts to pay, and that she would charge on sight.

The self-rage that is felt on missing some particularly fortunate chance is not confined to human beings alone. There is an old saying in the forest that a feline that has missed his stroke is like a jackal in dog-days — and that means that it is not safe to be anywhere in the region with him. He simply goes rabid and is quite likely to leap at the first living thing that stirs. Warwick knew that Nahara had just been cheated out of her kill and someone in the jungle would pay for it.

The gaudy birds that looked down from the tree-branches could scarcely recognize this prematurely gray man as a hunter. He walked rather quietly, yet with no conscious effort toward stealth. The rifle rested easily in his arms, his gray eyes were quiet and thoughtful as always. Singularly, his splendid features were quite in repose. The Burman, however, had more of the outer signs of alertness; and yet there was none of the blind terror upon him that marked the beaters.

"Where are the men?" Warwick asked quietly. "It is strange that we do not hear them shouting."

"They are afraid, Sahib," Singhai replied. "The forest pigs have left us to do our own hunting."

Warwick corrected him with a smile. "Forest pigs are brave enough," he answered. "They are sheep — just sheep — sheep of the plains."

The broad trail divided, like a three-tined candlestick, into narrow trails. Warwick halted beside the center of the three that led to the creek they were obliged to cross.

Just for an instant he stood watching, gazing into the deep-blue dusk of the deeper jungle. Twilight was falling softly. The trails soon vanished into shadow — patches of deep gloom, relieved here and there by a bright leaf that reflected the last twilight rays. A living creature coughed and rustled away in the thickets beside him.

"There is little use of going on," he said. "It is growing too dark. But there will be killings before the dawn if we don't get her first."

The servant stood still, waiting. It was not his place to advise his master.

"If we leave her, she'll come again before the dawn. Many of the herders haven't returned — she'll get one of them sure. At least we may cross the creek and get a view of the great fields. She is certain to cross them if she has heard the beaters."

In utter silence they went on. One hundred yards farther they came to the creek, and both strode in together to ford.

The water was only knee-deep, but Warwick's boots sank three inches in the mud of the bottom. And at that instant the gods of the jungle, always waiting with drawn scimitar for the unsuspecting, turned against them.

Singhai suddenly splashed down into the water, on his hands and knees. He did not cry out. If he made any sound at all, it was just a shivering gasp that the splash of water wholly obscured. But the thing that brought home the truth to Warwick was the pain that flashed, vivid as lightning, across his dark face; and the horror of death that left its shadow. Something churned and writhed in the mud; and then Warwick fired.

Both of them had forgotten Mugger, the crocodile, that so loves to wait in the mud of a ford. He had seized Singhai's foot, and had already snatched him down into the water when Warwick fired. No living flesh can withstand the terrible, rending shock of a high-powered sport-

ing rifle at close range. Mugger had plates of armor, but even these could not have availed against it if he had been exposed to the fire. As it was, several inches of water stood between, a more effective armor than a two-inch steel plate on a battleship. Of course the shock carried through, a smashing blow that caused the reptile to release his hold on Singhai's leg; but before the native could get to his feet he had struck again. The next instant both men were fighting for their lives.

They fought with their hands, and Warwick fought with his rifle, and the native slashed again and again with the long knife that he carried at his belt. To a casual glance, a crocodile is wholly incapable of quick action. These two found him a slashing, darting, wolf-like thing, lunging with astounding speed through the muddied water, knocking them from their feet and striking at them as they fell.

The reptile was only half grown, but in the water they had none of the usual advantages that man has over the beasts with which he does battle. Warwick could not find a target for his rifle. But even human bodies, usually so weak, find themselves possessed of an amazing reserve strength and agility in the moment of need. These men realized perfectly that their lives were the stakes for which they fought, and they gave every ounce of strength and energy they had. Their aim was to hold the mugger off until they could reach the shore.

At last, by a lucky stroke, Singhai's knife blinded one of the lurid reptile eyes. He was prone in the water when he administered it, and it went home just as the savage teeth were snapping at his throat. For an instant the great reptile flopped in an impotent half-circle, partly reared out of the water. It gave Warwick a chance to shoot, a single instant in which the rifle seemed to whirl about in his arms, drive to his shoulder, and blaze in the deepening twilight. And the shot went true. It pierced the mugger from beneath, tearing upward through the brain. And then the agitated waters of the ford slowly grew quiet.

The last echo of the report was dying when Singhai stretched his bleeding arms about Warwick's body, caught up the rifle and dragged them forty feet up on the shore. It was an effort that cost the last of his strength. And as the stars popped out of the sky, one by one, through the gray of dusk, the two men lay silent, side by side, on the grassy bank.

Warwick was the first to regain consciousness. At first he didn't understand the lashing pain in his wrists, the strange numbness in one of his legs, the darkness with the great white Indian stars shining through. Then he remembered. And he tried to stretch his arm to the prone form beside him.

The attempt was an absolute failure. The cool brain dispatched the message, it flew along the telegraph-wires of the nerves, but the muscles refused to react. He remembered that the teeth of the mugger had met in one of the muscles of his upper arm, but before unconsciousness had come upon him he had been able to lift the gun to shoot. Possibly infection from the bite had in some manner temporarily paralyzed the arm. He turned, wracked with pain, on his side and lifted his left arm. In doing so his hand crossed before his eyes — and then he smiled wanly in the darkness.

It was quite like Warwick, sportsman and English gentleman, to smile at a time like this. Even in the gray darkness of the jungle night he could see the hand quite plainly. It no longer looked slim and white. And he remembered that the mugger had caught his fingers in one of its last rushes.

He paused only for one glance at the mutilated member. He knew that his first work was to see how Singhai had fared. In that glance he was boundlessly relieved to see that the hand could unquestionably be saved. The fingers were torn, yet their bones did not seem to be severed. Temporarily at least, however, the hand was utterly useless. The fingers felt strange and detached.

He reached out to the still form beside him, touching the dark skin first with his fingers, and then, because they had ceased to function, with the flesh of his wrist. He expected to find it cold. Singhai was alive, however, and his warm blood beat close to the dark skin.

But he was deeply unconscious, and it was possible that one foot was hopelessly mutilated.

For a moment Warwick lay quite still, looking his situation squarely in the face. He did not believe that either he or his attendant was mortally or even very seriously hurt. True, one of his arms had suffered paralysis, but there was no reason for thinking it had been permanently injured. His hand would be badly scarred, but soon as good as ever. The real question that faced them was that of getting back to the bungalow.

Walking was out of the question. His whole body was bruised and lacerated, and he was already dangerously weak from loss of blood. It would take all his energy, these first few hours, to keep his consciousness. Besides, it was perfectly obvious that Singhai could not walk. And English gentlemen do not desert their servants at a time like this. The real mystery lay in the fact that the beaters had not already found and rescued them.

He wore a watch with luminous dial on his left wrist, and he managed to get it before his eyes. And then understanding came to him. A full hour had passed since he and his servant had fought the mugger in the ford. And the utter silence of early night had come down over the jungle.

There was only one thing to believe. The beaters had evidently heard him shoot, sought in vain for him in the thickets, possibly passed within a few hundred feet of him, and because he had been unconscious he had not heard them or called to them, and now they had given him up for lost. He remembered with bitterness how all of them had been sure that an encounter with Nahara would cost him his life, and would thus be all the more quick to believe he

had died in her talons. Nahara had her mate and her own lameness to avenge, they had said, attributing in their superstition human emotions to the brute natures of animals. It would have been quite useless for Warwick to attempt to tell them that the male tiger, in the mind of her wicked mate, was no longer even a memory, and that premeditated vengeance is an emotion almost unknown in the animal world. Without leaders or encouragement, and terribly frightened by the scene they had beheld before the village, they had quickly given up any attempt to find his body. There had been none among them coolheaded enough to reason out which trail he had likely taken, and thus look for him by the ford. Likely they were already huddled in their thatched huts, waiting till daylight.

Then he called in the darkness. A heavy body brushed through the creepers, and stepping falsely, broke a twig. He thought at first that it might be one of the villagers, coming to look for him. But at once the step was silenced.

Warwick had a disturbing thought that the creature that had broken the twig had not gone away, but was crouching down, in a curious manner, in the deep shadows. Nahara had returned to her hunting.

IV

"Some time I, too, will be a hunter of tigers," Little Shikara told his mother when the beaters began to circle through the bamboos. "To carry a gun beside Warwick Sahib — and to be honored in the circle under the tree!"

But his mother hardly listened. She was quivering with fright. She had seen the last part of the drama in front of the village; and she was too frightened even to notice the curious imperturbability of her little son. But there was no orderly retreat after Little Shikara had heard the two reports of the rifle. At first there were only the shouts of the beaters, singularly high-pitched, much running back and forth in the shadows, and then a pell-mell scurry to the shelter of the villages.

For a few minutes there was wild excitment at the village gates. Warwick Sahib was dead, they said — they had heard the shots and run to the place of firing, and beat up and down through the bamboos; and Warwick Sahib had surely been killed and carried off by the tigress. This dreadful story told, most of the villagers went to hide at once in their huts; only a little circle of the bravest men hovered at the gate. They watched with drawn faces the growing darkness.

But there was one among them who was not yet a man grown; a boy so small that he could hover, unnoticed, in the very smallest of the terrible shadow-patches. He was Little Shikara, and he was shocked to the very depths of his worshiping heart. For Warwick had been his hero, the greatest man of all time, and he felt himself burning with indignation that the beaters should return so soon. And it was a curious fact that he had not as yet been infected with the contagion of terror that was being passed from man to man among the villagers. Perhaps his indignation was too absorbing an emotion to leave room for terror, and perhaps, far down in his childish spirit, he was made of different stuff. He was a child of the jungle, and perhaps he had shared of that great imperturbability and impassiveness that is the eternal trait of the wildernesses.

He went up to one of the younger beaters who had told and retold a story of catching a glimpse of Nahara in the thickets until no one was left to tell it to. He was standing silent — and Little Shikara thought it possible that he might reach his ears.

"Give ear, Puran," he pleaded. "Didst thou look for his body beside the ford over Tarai stream?"

"Nay, little one — though I passed within one hundred paces."

"Dost thou not know that he and Singhai would of a certainty cross at the ford to reach the fringe of jungle from which he might watch the eastern field? Some of you looked on the trail beside the ford, but none looked at the

ford itself. And the sound of the rifle seemed to come from thence."

"But why did he not call out?"

"Dead men could not call, but at least ye might have frightened Nahara from the body. But perhaps he is wounded, unable to speak, and lies there still ——"

But Puran had found another listener for his story, and speedily forgot the boy. He hurried over to another of the villagers, Khusru the hunter.

"Did no one look by the ford?" he asked, almost sobbing. "For that is the place he had gone."

The native's eyes seemed to light. "*Hai*, little one, thou hast thought of what thy elders had forgotten. There is level land there, and clear. And I shall go at the first ray of dawn ——"

"But not to-night, Khusru —— ?"

"Nay, little sinner! Wouldst thou have me torn to pieces?"

Lastly Little Shikara went to his own father, and they had a moment's talk at the outskirts of the throng. But the answer was nay — just the same. Even his brave father would not go to look for the body until daylight came. The boy felt his skin prickling all over.

"But perhaps he is only wounded — and left to die. If I go and return with word that he is there, wilt thou take others and go out and bring him in?"

"*Thou* goest!" His father broke forth in a great roar of laughter. "Why, thou little hawk! One would think that thou wert a hunter of tigers thyself!"

Little Shikara blushed beneath the laughter. For he was a very boyish little boy in most ways. But it seemed to him that his sturdy young heart was about to break open from bitterness. All of them agreed that Warwick Sahib, perhaps wounded and dying, might be lying by the ford, but none of them would venture forth to see. Unknowing, he was beholding the expression of a certain age-old trait of human nature. Men do not fight ably in the

dark. They need their eyes, and they particularly require a definite object to give them determination. If these villagers knew for certain that the Protector of the Poor lay wounded or even dead beside the ford, they would have rallied bravely, encouraged one another with words and oaths, and gone forth to rescue him; but they wholly lacked the courage to venture again into the jungle on any such blind quest as Little Shikara suggested.

But the boy's father should not have laughed. He should have remembered the few past occasions when his straight little son had gone into the jungle alone; and that remembrance should have silenced him. The difficulty lay in the fact that he supposed his boy and he were of the same flesh, and that Little Shikara shared his own great dread of the night-curtained jungle. In this he was very badly mistaken. Little Shikara had an inborn understanding and love of the jungle; and except for such material dangers as that of Nahara, he was not afraid of it at all. He had no superstitions in regard to it. Perhaps he was too young. But the main thing that the laugh did was to set off, as a match sets off powder, a whole heartful of unexploded indignation in Shikara's breast. These villagers not only had deserted their patron and protector, but also they had laughed at the thought of rescue! His own father had laughed at him.

Little Shikara silently left the circle of villagers and turned into the darkness.

At once the jungle silence closed round him. He hadn't dreamed that the noise of the villagers would die so quickly. Although he could still see the flame of the fire at the village gate behind him, it was almost as if he had at once dropped off into another world. Great flowers poured perfume down upon him, and at seemingly a great distance he heard the faint murmur of the wind.

At first, deep down in his heart, he had really not intended to go all the way. He had expected to steal clear to the outer edge of the firelight; and then stand listening to

the darkness for such impressions as the jungle would choose to give him. But there had been no threshold, no interlude of preparation. The jungle in all its mystery had folded about him at once.

He trotted softly down the elephant trail, a dim, fleet shadow that even the keen eyes of Nahara could scarcely have seen. At first he was too happy to be afraid. He was always happy when the jungle closed round him. Besides, if Nahara had killed, she would be full-fed by now and not to be feared. Little Shikara hastened on, trembling all over with a joyous sort of excitement.

If a single bird had flapped its wings in the branches, if one little rodent had stirred in the underbrush, Little Shikara would likely have turned back. But the jungle-gods, knowing their son, stilled all the forest voices. He crept on, still looking now and again over his shoulder to see the village fire. It still made a bright yellow triangle in the dusk behind him. He didn't stop to think that he was doing a thing most grown natives and many white men would not have dared to do — to follow a jungle trail unarmed at night. If he had stopped to think at all he simply would have been unable to go on. He was only following his instincts, voices that such forces as maturity and grown-up intelligence and self-consciousness obscure in older men — and the terror of the jungle could not touch him. He went straight to do what service he could for the white sahib that was one of his lesser gods.

Time after time he halted, but always he pushed on a few more feet. Now he was over halfway to the ford, clear to the forks in the trail. And then he turned about with a little gasp of fear.

The light from the village had gone out. The thick foliage of the jungle had come between.

He was really frightened now. It wasn't that he was afraid he couldn't get back. The trail was broad and hard and quite gray in the moonlight. But those far-off beams of light had been a solace to his spirit, a reminder that he

had not yet broken all ties with the village. He halted, intending to turn back.

Then a thrill began at his scalp and went clear to his bare toes. Faint through the jungle silences he heard Warwick Sahib calling to his faithless beaters. The voice had an unmistakable quality of distress.

Certain of the villagers — a very few of them — said afterward that Little Shikara continued on because he was afraid to go back. They said that he looked upon the Heaven-born sahib as a source of all power, in whose protection no harm could befall him, and he sped toward him because the distance was shorter than back to the haven of fire at the village. But those who could look deeper into Little Shikara's soul knew different. In some degree at least he hastened on down that jungle trail of peril because he knew that his idol was in distress, and by laws that went deep he knew he must go to his aid.

V

The first few minutes after Warwick had heard a living step in the thickets he spent in trying to reload his rifle. He carried other cartridges in the right-hand trousers pocket, but after a few minutes of futile effort it became perfectly evident that he was not able to reach them. His right arm was useless, and the fingers of his left, lacerated by the mugger's bite, refused to take hold.

He had, however, three of the five shells the rifle held still in his gun. The single question that remained was whether or not they would be of use to him.

The rifle lay half under him, its stock protruding from beneath his body. With the elbow of his left arm he was able to work it out. Considering the difficulties under which he worked, he made amazingly few false motions; and yet he worked with swiftness. Warwick was a man who had been schooled and trained by many dangers; he had learned to face them with open eyes and steady hands, to judge with unclouded thought the exact percentage of his

chances. He knew now that he must work swiftly. The shape in the shadow was not going to wait all night.

But at that moment the hope of preserving his life that he had clung to until now broke like a bubble in the sunlight. He could not lift the gun to swing and aim it at a shape in the darkness. With his mutilated hands he could not cock the strong-springed hammer. And if he could do both these things with his fumbling, bleeding, lacerated fingers, his right hand could not be made to pull the trigger. Warwick Sahib knew at last just where he stood. Yet if human sight could have penetrated that dusk, it would have beheld no change of expression in the lean face.

An English gentleman lay at the frontier of death. But that occasioned neither fawning nor a loss of his rigid self-control.

Two things remained, however, that he might do. One was to call and continue to call, as long as life lasted in his body. He knew perfectly that more than once in the history of India a tiger had been kept at a distance, at least for a short period of time, by shouts alone. In that interlude, perhaps help might come from the village. The second thing was almost as impossible as raising and firing the rifle; but by the luck of the gods he might achieve it. He wanted to find Singhai's knife and hold it compressed in his palm.

It wasn't that he had any vain hopes of repelling the tiger's attack with a single knife-blade that would be practically impossible for his mutilated hand to hold. Nahara had five or so knife-blades in every paw and a whole set of them in her mouth. She could stand on four legs and fight, and Warwick could not lift himself on one elbow and yet wield the blade. But there were other things to be done with blades, even held loosely in the palm, at a time like this.

He knew rather too much of the way of tigers. They do not always kill swiftly. It is the tiger way to tease, long moments, with half-bared talons; to let the prey crawl

away a few feet for the rapture of leaping at it again; to fondle with an exquisite cruelty for moments that seem endless to its prey. A knife, on the other hand, kills quickly. Warwick much preferred the latter death.

And even as he called, again and again, he began to feel about in the grass with his lacerated hand for the hilt of the knife. Nahara was steadily stealing toward him through the shadows.

The great tigress was at the height of her hunting madness. The earlier adventure of the evening when she had missed her stroke, the stir and tumult of the beaters in the wood, her many days of hunger, had all combined to intensify her passion. And finally there had come the knowledge, in subtle ways, that two of her own kind of game were lying wounded and helpless beside the ford.

But even the royal tiger never forgets some small measure of its caution. She did not charge at once. The game looked so easy that it was in some way suggestive of a trap. She crept forward, a few feet at a time. The wild blood began to leap through the great veins. The hair went stiff on the neck muscles.

But Warwick shouted; and the sound for an instant appalled her. She lurked in the shadows. And then, as she made a false step, Warwick heard her for the first time.

Again she crept forward, to pause when Warwick raised his voice the second time. The man knew enough to call at intervals rather than continuously. A long, continued outcry would very likely stretch the tiger's nerves to a breaking point and hurl her into a frenzy that would probably result in a death-dealing charge. Every few seconds he called again. In the intervals between, the tiger crept forward. Her excitement grew upon her. She crouched lower. Her sinewy tail had whipped softly at first; now it was lashing almost to her sides. And finally it began to have a slight vertical movement that Warwick, fortunately for his spirit, could not see.

Then the little light that the moon poured down was suddenly reflected in Nahara's eyes. All at once they burned out of the dusk; two blue-green circles of fire fifty feet distant in the darkness. At that Warwick gasped — for the first time. In another moment the great cat would be in range — and he had not yet found the knife. Nothing remained to believe but that it was lost in the mud of the ford, fifty feet distant, and that the last dread avenue of escape was cut off.

But at that instant the gasp gave way to a whispered oath of wonder. Some living creature was running lightly down the trail toward him — soft, light feet that came with amazing swiftness. For once in his life Warwick did not know where he stood. For once he was the chief figure of a situation he did not entirely understand. He tried to probe into the darkness with his tired eyes.

"Here I am!" he called. The tiger, starting to creep forward once more, halted at the voice. A small straight figure sped like an arrow out of the thickets and halted at his side.

It was such an astounding appearance as for an instant completely paralyzes the mental faculties. Warwick's first emotion was simply a great and hopeless astonishment. Long inured to the mystery of the jungle, he thought he had passed the point where any earthly happening could actually bewilder him. But in spite of it, in spite of the fire-eyed peril in the darkness, he was quite himself when he spoke. The voice that came out of the silence was wholly steady — a kindly, almost amused voice of one who knows life as it is and who has mastered his own destiny.

"Who in the world?" he asked in the vernacular.

"It is I — Little Shikara," a tremulous voice answered. Except for the tremor he could not keep from his tone, he spoke as one man to another.

Warwick knew at once that Little Shikara was not yet aware of the presence of the tiger fifty feet distant in the

shadows. But he knew nothing else. The whole situation was beyond his ken.

But his instincts were manly and true. "Then run speedily, little one," he whispered, "back to the village. There is danger here in the dark."

Little Shikara tried to speak, and he swallowed painfully. A lump had come in his throat that at first would not let him talk. "Nay, Protector of the Poor!" he answered. "I — I came alone. And I — I am thy servant."

Warwick's heart bounded. Not since his youth had left him to a gray world had his strong heart leaped in just this way before. "Merciful God!" he whispered in English. "Has a child come to save me?" Then he whipped again into the vernacular and spoke swiftly; for no further seconds were to be wasted. "Little Shikara, have you ever fired a gun?"

"No, Sahib ——"

"Then lift it up and rest it across my body. Thou knowest how it is held ——"

Little Shikara didn't know exactly, but he rested the gun on Warwick's body; and he had seen enough target practice to crook his finger about the trigger. And together, the strangest pair of huntsmen that the Indian stars ever looked down upon, they waited.

"It is Nahara," Warwick explained softly. For he had decided to be frank with Little Shikara, trusting all to the courage of a child. "It all depends on thee. Pull back the hammer with thy thumb."

Little Shikara obeyed. He drew it back until it clicked, and did not, as Warwick had feared, let it slip through his fingers back against the breach. "Yes, Sahib," he whispered breathlessly. His little brave heart seemed about to explode in his breast. But it was the test, and he knew he must not waver in the sahib's eyes.

"It is Nahara, and thou art a man," Warwick said again. "And now thou must wait until thou seest her eyes."

So they strained into the darkness; and in an instant more they saw again the two circles of greenish, smouldering fire. They were quite near now — Nahara was almost in leaping range.

"Thou wilt look through the little hole at the rear and then along the barrel," Warwick ordered swiftly, "and thou must see the two eyes along the little notch in front."

"I see, Sahib — and between the eyes," came the same breathless whisper. The little brown body held quite still. Warwick could not even feel it trembling against his own. For the moment, by virtue of some strange prank of Shiv, the jungle-gods were giving their own strength to this little brown son of theirs beside the ford.

"Thou wilt not jerk or move?"

"Nay, Sahib." And he spoke true. The world might break to pieces or blink out, but he would not throw off his aim by any terror motions. They could see the tiger's outline now — the lithe, low-hung body, the tail that twitched up and down.

"Then pull the trigger," Warwick whispered.

The whole jungle world rocked and trembled from the violence of the report.

When the villagers, aroused by the roar of the rifle and led by Khusru and Puran and Little Shikara's father, rushed down with their firebrands to the ford, their first thought was that they had come only to the presence of the dead. Three human beings lay very still beside the stream, and fifty feet in the shadows something else, that obviously was *not* a human being, lay very still, too. But they were not to have any such horror story to tell their wives. Only one of the three by the ford, Singhai, the gun-bearer, was even really unconscious; Little Shikara, the rifle still held lovingly in his arms, had gone into a half-faint from fear and nervous exhaustion, and Warwick Sahib had merely closed his eyes to the darting light of the firebrands. The only death that had occurred was that of Nahara the tigress — and she had a neat hole bored com-

pletely through her neck. To all evidence, she had never stirred after Little Shikara's bullet had gone home.

After much confusion and shouting and falling over one another, and gazing at Little Shikara as if he were some new kind of ghost, the villagers got a stretcher each for Singhai and the Protector of the Poor. And when they got them well loaded into them, and Little Shikara had quite come to himself and was standing with some bewilderment in a circle of staring townspeople, a clear, commanding voice ordered that they all be silent. Warwick Sahib was going to make what was the nearest approach to a speech that he had made since various of his friends had decoyed him to a dinner in London some years before.

The words that he said, the short vernacular words that have a way of coming straight to the point, established Little Shikara as a legend through all that corner of British India. It was Little Shikara who had come alone through the jungle, said he; it was Little Shikara's shining eyes that had gazed along the barrel, and it was his own brown finger that had pulled the trigger. Thus, said Warwick, he would get the bounty that the British Government offered — British rupees that to a child's eyes would be past counting. Thus in time, with Warwick's influence, his would be a great voice through all of India. For small as he was, and not yet grown, he was of the true breed.

After the shouting was done, Warwick turned to Little Shikara to see how he thought upon all these things. "Thou shalt have training for the army, little one, where thy good nerve will be of use, and thou shalt be a native officer, along with the sons of princes. I, myself, will see to it, for I do not hold my life so cheap that I will forget the thing that thou hast done to-night."

And he meant what he said. The villagers stood still when they saw his earnest face. "And what, little hawk, wilt thou have more?" he asked.

Little Shikara trembled and raised his eyes. "Only

sometimes to ride with thee, in thy *howdah*, as thy servant, when thou again seekest the tiger."

The whole circle laughed at this. They were just human, after all. Their firebrands were held high, and gleamed on Little Shikara's dusky face, and made a luster in his dark eyes. The circle, roaring with laughter, did not hear the sahib's reply but they did see him nod his head.

"I would not dare go without thee now," Warwick told him.

And thus Little Shikara's dreams came true — to be known through many villages as a hunter of tigers, and a brave follower and comrade of the forest trails. And thus he came into his own — in those far-off glades of Burma, in the jungles of the Manipur.

EDISON MARSHALL

Edison Marshall was born in Rensselaer, Indiana, in 1894. In 1904 his family moved to Oregon where he still makes his home in the town of Medford. While a student in the University of Oregon, he published his first short story. Since 1916 he has devoted himself to writing as a profession and has been especially successful in his short stories of animal life. His interest in the short story prompted his endowment of the Edison Marshall Short Story Contest in the University of Oregon. When not busy with writing, Mr. Marshall likes to spend his time in outdoor sports, especially in hunting, and in travel in the Far North. During the World War, he served as a Lieutenant. Although Mr. Marshall acknowledges his indebtedness to Rudyard Kipling, whom he greatly admires, he shows in his stories an originality of conception and an artistic ability which place him far above the class of imitators. Edison Marshall's stories are especially recommended to those who love the out-of-doors.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Does this story succeed in making you feel the atmosphere of the jungle? What specific details contribute to this effect?

2. What motives led Little Shikara to go alone into the jungle? Why does he not return when he finds himself out of sight of the village fires? Point out passages in which the author explains the nature of Little Shikara and thus makes his action seem probable.
3. The author uses the phrase "the gods of the jungle, always waiting with drawn scimitar for the unsuspecting." Give instances from the story which prove the truth of this.
4. When Warwick Sahib regains consciousness at the ford, how does he show his training as a soldier?
5. Write a letter from Warwick Sahib to a friend in England, telling him of Little Shikara's bravery.
6. Read *Wee Willie Winkie*, by Rudyard Kipling and compare Wee Willie Winkie with Little Shikara. In what respects are the two alike? Are the actions of both boys consistent with what we learn of their characters? Is hero worship such as theirs true to life?

Animal stories you will like:

The Elephant Remembers — Edison Marshall
The Voice of the Pack — Edison Marshall
Moti Guj-Mutineer — Rudyard Kipling
Rikki-Tikki-Tavi — Rudyard Kipling
The Call of the Wild — Jack London
Zenobia's Infidelity — H. C. Bunner
The Trial in Tom Belcher's Store — Samuel Derieux

PRELUDE

By EDGAR VALENTINE SMITH

When she was fifteen years old Selina Jo was doing a man's work in Pruitt's turpentine orchard; properly, though, her story begins earlier than this.

It was shortly before his daughter was born that Shug Hudsill brought his young wife, Marthy, to a sandy land homestead — twenty-five miles from the nearest railroad — in that section of the country which borders the Gulf of Mexico. There followed shortly the inevitable log rolling, at which the neighbors — mostly Hudsills themselves — contributed their labor. Shug furnished refreshments in the form of "shinny," an unpalatable, but unusually potent, native rum. Otherwise, his part in the erection of his future home was largely advisory. Despite this, though, the house, a two-room cabin of the "saddle-bag" type, was soon erected. Hand-split pine boards covered the roof and gave fair promise of keeping out the rain. An unglazed window and a door in each room, which would be closed with rough wooden shutters during inclement weather, served for ventilation and lighting. A stick-and-clay chimney at one end of the cabin gave outlet to the single fireplace which was to answer the dual purpose of cooking and heating

By devious methods Shug accumulated two or three runty, tick-infested cows and a few razorback hogs. These were left, in the main, to shift for themselves. There were tough native grasses available and the cane brakes in Shoalwater River were close by. During severe weather such of the cows as chanced to be giving a few pints of thin,watery milk daily were fed a little home-grown fodder and corn on the ear. With proboscides inordinately sharpened for the purpose, the hogs probed for succulent

roots in the rank undergrowth of the near-by swamp. When hog-killing season arrived Shug would shoulder his gun and slouch away for his winter's supply of meat. Neighbors charged it against him that he was not always careful to see to it that they were his own shotes which he killed. Since it was a simple matter, though, to snip off the telltale ear markings of a dead pig, his pilferings, if a fact, were never proved.

Corn sprouted slowly in the thin soil; it grew up dispiritedly, and came to maturity stunted as to blade, stalk, and ear. Sweet potatoes yielded generously in new ground; each year a fresh plot was cleared, broken and planted to these. A patch of sugar cane was always grown for molasses; a portion of this, it was generally conceded, was finally made into "shinny," since Shug was known to be an adept at its manufacture. Certain it is that he made frequent extended trips away from home with his wagon and yoke of oxen, never troubling to explain the reason for his absence.

It was amid these surroundings, sufficient in themselves, one would have said, to hinder physical, mental, and moral growth, that the girl Selina Jo was born. The occasion was in no sense of the word an event with Shug and Marthy. Since all married people of their acquaintance had children, the baby simply represented, to them, the inevitable. With the birth of the child, though, Marthy became barren.

For the first eighteen months of her existence the baby crawled about the cabin unnamed. Then it occurred to Marthy that their offspring ought to be christened.

"Shug," she suggested casually, "seems to me we ort to be namin' that air young 'un."

Shug, lolling in the shade of a water oak, shifted his quid and spat disinterestedly. "I ain't objectin' none," he replied.

"How 'bout callin' her 'S'liny Jo'?" Marthy asked.

"Fittin' enough name fer her, I reckin," Shug yawned.

As the child grew up she came to accept her parents as they had long since accepted her — merely as a bald fact. There was never the slightest evidence of parental affection upon the one side or of filial attachment upon the other.

Once Marthy came upon Shug whipping the girl with a switch.

"What you whippin' her fer?" she asked. Her tone was one of simple curiosity, nothing else.

"All young 'uns needs it," Shug replied virtuously, as he tossed the switch aside. "Hadn't been my daddy use-tah whale me powerful, I wouldn't a been nigh the man I am now; not nigh."

It was a matter for remark between the parents that, even at a tender age, Selina Jo rarely emitted any outcry under punishment. There burned in her sloe-black eyes, though, the flame of an emotion which she checked upon the surface.

One would have expected the girl to respond to the influence of heredity. Her parents, the cattle, the hogs, even the crops about her were stunted, half starved in appearance. By contrast, Selina Jo, upon a daily ration made up almost exclusively of corn pone, molasses, and home-cured pork as salt as ocean brine, defied all known dietary laws, and flourished amazingly. She was precocious, too. When she was only seven years old she could swear just as well — rather, just as wickedly — as could Shug himself. She learned early, though, that, as a source of information, her parents were practically *nil*. Thenceforth, the questions that had rushed to her lips were succeeded by a look of eternal interrogation in her somber eyes.

It was shortly after her twelfth birthday that a young school-teacher — the only one the community ever knew — came into the Hudsill settlement. Selina Jo was grudgingly allowed to attend the school. For six months the young man's enthusiasm held out. Then it waned and died. Few of the old people could either read or write,

and the opinion among them seemed to be universal that what was good enough for them was good enough for their offspring. But before the school closed Selina Jo had learned the alphabet and a portion of the old-fashioned first reader.

She missed the school, and she always kept, close at hand, her thumbed and dog-eared book, the only one that she possessed. The school-teacher had lighted the fires of ambition within her. She came to be troubled by the realization that her mental development was lagging behind her physical growth.

"S'liny Jo," she informed herself one day in a fit of musing, "you air as p'izen strong as a gallon o' green shinny, but you don't know skercely nothin'." A moment later she added dejectedly: "Ner ain't got no chancet o' learnin', neether; not narry par-tick-le of a chancet!"

Shoalwater River afforded her chief means of diversion. She never remembered when or how she learned to swim. Every day that the weather permitted she enjoyed a plunge in the river. Soon she noticed that no less pleasant than the contact of the water with her naked body was the comfortable after-feeling of cleanliness. Following this, came a feeling of repugnance toward her shiftless and slovenly parents.

She had long since begun to assist with the crops. With the manure scraped from the cow lot she made the beds for the potatoes. At planting time she pulled the slips and set them out. She hoed the sugar cane and thinned the corn. During harvest she did almost as much work as Shug and Marthy combined.

Before she was fourteen she had broken a pair of young steers to the yoke. She split the rails and laid the fence for a new potato patch. Using for the purpose the young oxen which she had broken, she prepared the ground for planting. She was as tall as her father now, a slender, wiry creature, her symmetrical young body as free from blemish as the trunk of a healthy pine tree.

A vague unrest troubled her at times, though. Something occurred one day which intensified this. In a corner of the cabin she found a dust-covered photograph. Brushing it off, she gazed upon a face that was unfamiliar. She took the picture to Marthy.

"Maw," she asked, "who is this?"

Her mother glanced at it indifferently. "Me," she answered listlessly.

"*You?*" Selina Jo gasped.

"Yeah. Ruther, it usetah be. Tuck when I married yore paw."

Selina Jo scanned the comely pictured face for some likeness to the slatternly creature who had given her birth. Wild resentment against something — she scarcely knew what — flamed in her heart. Suddenly she dashed the photograph to the floor and hurried from the cabin. As one reads the chronicle of her words, it must be remembered that her vocabulary was patterned after that of her father.

"Oh, Goddlemighty!" she burst out tempestuously, "I don't want to be like her! I ain't goin' to, neether!"

Her acquaintances were limited to the score of families, most of them relatives, and all of them mental and moral replicas of her own, who lived near by. There was an almost abandoned church in the neighborhood where, at rare intervals, some itinerant preacher held services. Upon one occasion, though, Shug took the family to preaching in what was known as the Briggs settlement which was ten miles nearer the railroad. It was here that Selina Jo had it impressed upon her young mind just how people of her stripe were looked upon by those cast in another mould.

Shortly after they had seated themselves in the church, Shug, uncouth and unshaven on the men's side, and she and her mother on that reserved for her sex, Selina Jo heard one of the women whisper to her neighbor:

"Some o' that Hudsill tribe!"

As the girl caught the slur in the words her face flushed darkly. She began to notice the unfavorable looks with which the men of the congregation were regarding her father. Even the children stared superciliously toward her mother and herself. Puzzled, vaguely hurt, at first she wondered why.

Lingering just outside the church at the close of services, she waited, shyly hopeful that some one would speak to her. No one paid her the slightest heed. In a land where a lack of hospitality was the one unpardonable sin, this alone was enough to convince her that something was terribly wrong somewhere. But she held her peace until they had completed the tedious homeward journey.

"Maw," she demanded abruptly, as soon as they were alone, "how come we ain't like other folks?"

"What air you talkin' about?" Marthy intoned querulously.

"Them folks in that air Briggs settlement."

"Wa'l?"

"They looked slanchwise at Paw when we went in an' set down." Selina Jo waited a moment, her face clouding at the thought. "An' them li'l old gals looked slanchwise at me, too. Durn 'em!"

"How kin I he'p the way they looked at us?" Marthy whined. "Treatin' us thatta way just 'cause we air pore."

"'Tweren't that, neether," the girl insisted stubbornly. "Them men — most of 'em — was wearin' overhalls. The school-teacher said rich folks don't wear them kind o' clo'es to meetin'."

"Tryin' to git better 'n yore raisin', air you?" Marthy suddenly showed unwonted spirit. "Wa'l, gal, you kin just make up yore mind to be like yore pore maw an' ——"

"I ain't goin' to be like you!" The words shot out with sudden passion. "I ain't!"

"God ha' mercy!" Marthy's usually expressionless face showed a trace of surprise at this outburst. "But I've

allus said seein' lots o' things gits notions inta young 'uns' heads what ain't good fer 'em."

"Ner that ain't all I seed, neether," Selina Jo retorted. "They didn't none o' them folks — not nary one o' 'em — ast us home to eat a Sunday dinner with 'em."

At the conclusion of the church service she had seen invitations to the noonday meal being extended and accepted right and left by the Briggs settlement householders. Since it was the custom to include the veriest stranger in these, the fact that none had been offered her people left room for only one conclusion: the Hudsills were looked upon by their neighbors as being unworthy to receive one. Slowly the impression fastened itself upon her brain that her family was hopelessly low in the social scale — "poison low-down," she would have phrased it. This conviction gripped her. It stung — and it stayed with her.

Fortunately, something occurred about this time to divert her thoughts temporarily. Three miles from Shug's home, Pruitt Brothers, turpentine operators, established a woods commissary. Selina Jo's first visit to the store left her gasping with pleasure. Filled with the usual gaudy assortment carried in stock by the general country store, to the half-starved eyes and soul of the woods-bred girl, the place was a wonderland. Dress goods in loud patterns dazzled her sight; vari-colored ribbons flaunted themselves tantalizingly before her gaze. But the one thing that charmed her, that held her spellbound, was a cheap, ready-made gingham dress. She made frequent unnecessary trips to the store merely to feast her eyes upon it. She would look from it to the faded homespun that she wore and sigh enviously. Once she even mustered the courage to ask the price. It was an insignificant sum, but the thought struck her with sickening force that it might just as well have been a thousand dollars. She had never owned a piece of money in her life.

Slowly, as her yearning for the dress became almost un-

bearable, a plan formed in her mind. Coming in from her tasks one day, she found Shug, just returned from one of his mysterious periodical trips.

"Paw," she began timidly, "I — I got a hankerin'."

"S'posin' you have?" Shug's manner was more surly than usual. "A hankerin' never hurt nobody, yet."

"But, but I shore 'nough want sump'm."

"Wantin' an' gittin' is diffe'ent things. What is it?"

"They's the purtiest dress over to Pruitt's store," Selina Jo began eagerly, "an' it's made outen real gingham."

"Gingham?" Shug whirled about with a snarl. "What air you talkin' about, gal?"

Selina Jo's heart sank. "I ain't never had nary one," she offered placatingly. "An' ——"

"Ner ain't never li'ble to, neether. Homespun's good enough fer yore pore maw an' it'll hatter be good enough fer you. I ain't going to be workin' myse'f to skin an' bone to be fittin' out no young 'un in fancy riggin's."

"But, Paw, it don't cost much."

"It costes just that much more 'n you're going to git. Shet up!"

It was then that Selina Jo unfolded her plan. "I'm goin' to git me that air dress," she announced dispassionately. "I'm aimin' to pay fer it myse'f, too."

"How?"

"Yearnin' the money at public work."

"You?" Shug snorted derisively. "Whare'll you git any public work?"

"In Pruitt's turkentime orchard. They's a heap o' the work I kin do. I could do scrapin' er dippin'; reckin I could even do hackin'."

Shug had slumped into the one comfortable chair in the room. Turning his head, he glared at his daughter.

"You air not goin' to work in no turkentime orchard," he rasped. "You air goin' to stay right here an' he'p yore pore maw an' me. I told you oncet to shet up!"

It struck Selina Jo suddenly that life was, somehow, terribly one-sided and unfair. Other girls in the community, who didn't work as hard as she did, were beginning to wear gingham dresses for Sunday. She thought bitterly that in return for her slaving she had received bed and board — nothing more. By everything that was right, she reasoned, she had earned at least one store-bought dress. Yet it was roughly denied her. Some of the thoughts which had been haunting her for months struggled for expression. Her soul cried out against what was a patent injustice. But she managed to speak calmly.

"Fer as I kin figger it out, Paw," she said, "I been doin' my sheer o' keepin' this here fambly up. I broke them last yoke o' steers, an' one of 'em you was afeared to tech. I've split rails an' laid fences; I've broke new ground. An' the fu'st time I ast fer anything you say I cain't have it."

She ceased speaking for a moment, but her steady gaze never left Shug's face.

"Now, I'm goin' to work fer Pruitt," she continued slowly, "till I get me the money I need."

Something must have occurred during Shug's recent trip — probably a hurried flight from officers — to increase his normal perverseness. He had risen from his chair. Taking a heavy leather strap from the wall, he started toward Selina Jo.

"You air, huh?" Advancing, he fondled the strap suggestively. "You'll git a larrupin', that's what!"

With the first evidence of her father's intention, Selina Jo's face had flushed a brick red. Now it paled suddenly. She had not even been threatened with corporal punishment for years. Wild rebellion surged within her. A carving knife lay upon the rude deal table beside which she was standing. One slim, brown hand dropped down beside the knife. Her emotion visible only in the tumultuous heaving of her breast and the white, set expression of her face, she waited motionless, her dark, somber eyes gazing unwaveringly into Shug's face.

"Paw," she said evenly, "just you tech me oncet with that strop an', as shore as God gives me stren'th, I'll cut yore heart out."

An innate coward, Shug recognized a danger sign when he saw it. The hand which held the strap dropped to his side. He backed slowly away.

"You . . . you . . ." he sputtered and stopped.

"You an' Maw been sayin'," Selina Jo continued, "that I'm tryin' to be better n' my raisin'. But I ain't forgot how them Briggs settlement folks looked at us slanchwise. 'Tweren't 'cause we was p'izen pore, neether. They knowed, somehow, we was plumb low-down an' ornery. That's why they didn't none of 'em ast us to a Sunday dinner. They seed we was trash. 'Course I'm honin' to be better 'n that kind o' raisin' — an' I'm goin' to, too!"

Shug had retreated to the doorway, where he stood watching this new daughter of his with furtive, fearful eyes. The meanest of petty tyrants, when he held the whip hand, doubtless he expected that Selina Jo would exhibit the same trait. There was nothing of the bully in the girl, though. Threatened with what she considered to be undeserved punishment, she had simply acted upon the dictates of her immature mind and had seized upon the only means at hand to escape it.

It was several moments before Shug mustered courage to speak. "Sence you air goin' to do public work," he whined presently, "'tain't nothin' but right you ort to pay fer yore bed an' board."

Selina Jo was glad to agree to this arrangement. When informed of it later, Marthy sullenly acquiesced. She would have to do the housework now, which was no more to her liking than the realization that Shug would permanently pocket the money for their daughter's board.

It was the next day that Selina Jo sought out Lige Tuttle, woods foreman for Pruitt Brothers.

"I'm lookin' fer a job," she announced bluntly.

"Sorry," Tuttle answered brusquely, "but all our cooks are niggers."

"Cook?" was the scornful answer. "I ain't astin' to be no cook. I want shore 'nough work."

Tuttle smiled patronizingly. "What can you do?"

"Scrapin', dippin', er hackin'," was the confident answer.

"You?" Tuttle laughed softly. "Why, that's a man's work. It's hard."

"Any harder 'n breakin' bull yearlin's to the yoke? Er splittin' rails an' breakin' new ground?"

"Mean to say you've done all that?"

"I most bardaceously have!"

Labor was scarce at the time. Tuttle considered the girl's request carefully, asked a few more questions, and decided to take a chance.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"S'liny Jo."

"What else?"

It was the first time Selina Jo had ever been asked her surname; she felt the blood rush to her face.

"What's your last name?" Tuttle repeated.

The answer came almost inaudibly: "Hudsill."

"Shug Hudsill's young 'un?"

"How kin I he'p it?" the girl burst out passionately. "If you'd a been borned a Hudsill, you'd hatter be one, too!"

"Don't get mad, child." There was something in the spirit of this strange creature that Tuttle could not understand; but he respected it. "I wasn't aimin' to low-rate you none just because of your daddy. Come here tomorrow mornin', an' I'll try you out."

Selina Jo found that the work *was* hard. The dry, slippery pine needles underfoot made walking itself a task. She carried a heavy bucket into which she dipped the raw gum, emptying the bucket, when filled, into barrels scattered about the orchard. From sunup till sunset, and

later, she toiled; not once, though, did she grumble. She was too foolishly happy. What she was undergoing was the prelude to real existence, as she saw it. What better, she asked herself, could any strong, healthy girl desire than a steady job dipping turpentine for which she was paid real money?

Occasional passersby, strangers to the vicinity, amazed at seeing a girl engaged in such unusual work, would pause to ask friendly questions. The first flush of pleasure that this gave Selina Jo was quickly erased by the bitter aftertang of reflection: these people were kind because they did not know she was a Hudsill.

While with practice she developed skill, it was three months before she had saved the money she needed. The gingham dress had been laid aside for her. But her ambition had soared. A beautiful dress above a pair of bare legs and feet would never do. Then, too, since her only item of headgear was the sun-bonnet which she wore every day, she would need, besides shoes and stockings, a hat.

The day came at last, though, when she could make her purchases. With her arms filled with bundles, she started out joyously on her three-mile walk home.

A half mile from the commissary she paused indecisively at a crossroads. The right-hand road, leading to Shoalwater River, meant the lengthening of her journey a full mile; but the river, with its promise of a cooling plunge enticed her. As she stood hesitant, trying to decide, she observed a stranger approaching on horseback. She drew aside to let him pass, but he reined in his horse and hailed her.

"Evenin', little sister! Live hereabouts?"

"Down the left-hand fork a piece." Selina Jo bent her steady glance upon the stranger. "Who air you?"

"I'm Holmes — sheriff of the county."

Instinctively the girl drew back. "What air you wantin' o' me? I ain't done nothin'."

"Lord bless you, little sister," the sheriff laughed, "I'm not after you. Thought maybe as you live round here you might tell me something I want to know."

It seemed that a murder had recently been committed in the bay-shore country ten miles distant. Circumstances pointed to the guilt of two men who had been arrested. Assuming that the murderers had passed through the Hudsill section en route to or from the scene of the crime, the sheriff was seeking evidence to prove this.

Strangers were enough of a rarity in the neighborhood to be remembered easily. Selina Jo recalled two men who had passed that way whose description fitted those charged with the murder.

Sheriff Holmes was elated. "Would you like a trip to Eastview?" he asked.

"Eastview?" Selina Jo's heart skipped a beat. "That's town, ain't it — whare the railroad trains is at?"

"Yes. We'll want you there a week from to-day." The sheriff filled in a blank subpœna and extended it to the girl. "Look me up in the courthouse soon as you get to town."

Selina Jo's breathless announcement that she was going to court created a flurry at home until Shug learned why she had been summoned. Then he breathed easily.

It was decided that she could use the oxen and wagon for the trip, as Eastview was twenty-five miles distant. This method of travel, being slow, would necessitate an early start on the day before the trial. When that day dawned, though, one of the oxen was found to be indisposed. Selina Jo assembled a lunch of corn pone and side meat, filled a small bottle with molasses, and, dressed in her new finery, set out on foot.

Within an hour the new shoes began to pinch. She took them off, tied them together by their strings and slung them over her shoulder. The stockings were rolled into balls and stuffed into her pockets.

Late in the afternoon she bathed her feet and legs in

a brook just outside Eastview and donned shoes and stockings again.

It was dusk when she arrived at the sheriff's office. An overflow crowd at the single hotel necessitated her staying with Sheriff Holmes' family that night.

With the inborn timidity of the woods-bred girl, she remained there until summoned to court in the late forenoon of the following day. By the time her evidence was concluded, though, she had partially overcome her shyness, and was ready for sightseeing.

Wandering about the interior of the courthouse, she marveled at the white plaster walls. Then she watched several people using the sanitary drinking fountain. Presently she found courage to try it herself. The technic she found to be rather difficult, but after she had mastered it she became a frequent patron.

Later, she ventured outside the courthouse.

Sheriff Holmes found her during the noon recess. She had commandeered a small goods box which she was using as a seat. Her enraptured gaze was fastened upon a scene across the street. Three large, two-story frame buildings, painted a dazzling white, stood upon a lot which occupied an entire block. Beneath the branches of huge water oaks, scores of girls, dressed in white blouses and dark-blue skirts, could be seen.

Sheriff Holmes smiled understandingly. "Like it?"

Selina Jo did not even turn her head. "Whose is them air li'l gals?" she asked breathlessly.

"The State's — for the present," was the answer.

"Who?"

"The State. That's the reformatory for girls."

It was plain that the remark conveyed no information to Selina Jo. "Do which?" she asked.

"When girls — young ones, like you — break the law," the sheriff explained, "they bring them here to be reformed."

"What's re-formed?"

"Well . . . it's like this: before they let a girl go again, she has to prove that she's been changed for the better."

"Changed?" Selina Jo looked up with a quick indrawn breath. "They makes 'em diffe'ent f'um what they was?"

"Ye-e-es . . . that's about it, I guess."

"Do they learn 'em outen books in there?"

"Oh, yes; they have regular hours for study."

"An' could — could a gal git in there what didn't know nothin' but a part o' the fu'st reader?"

"You don't understand, yet, child. It's only for girls who do wrong. Now, a girl like you never would go there."

Selina Jo sighed dejectedly. Her eyes caressed the buildings with their spotless white walls and wide-flung shutters, and the groups of girls scattered about the lawn.

Presently she pointed to a high iron picket fence which enclosed the lot. "What's the fence fer?" she asked.

"Why, if that fence wasn't there, little sister, half the girls there would light out before midnight," the sheriff answered.

"They'd run away?" Selina Jo shook her head incredulously. "F'um them purty houses?"

Since it would be impossible for her to reach home that day, she spent another night with the sheriff's family. In her dreams she saw white-painted buildings fashioned of real lumber. There was real glass in the windows, too; they weren't just yawning black holes in the walls. And the chimneys were of brick; so different from the flimsy stick-and-clay affair that leaned drunkenly against one end of the cabin at home. Home! She seemed to sicken at the thought.

Her dreams were peopled with girls in white blouses and blue skirts, thousands of them, it seemed to her. They were all within an iron-fenced inclosure, beckoning to her to enter; and she was always just on the outside.

With morning came thoughts of her work in the turpentine orchard. Inexplicably, a vague dissatisfaction awoke within her. The idea began to burn itself into her consciousness that, though she might spend a lifetime in honest toil there, she would always be referred to as "one of that Hudsill tribe." Apparently there was no escape from that.

During breakfast she was unusually quiet and thoughtful. With a shy acknowledgment of thanks, she accepted the liberal lunch provided by the sheriff's wife and made her adieus. Two miles outside the town she left the highway. A hundred yards from the road she seated herself upon a log and grimly prepared to wait.

Darkness had fallen when she again entered Eastview and cautiously approached the reformatory from the rear. She scaled the iron fence with comparative ease. Crouching low, she crept toward a lighted window on the ground floor. Two girls of about her own age sat at a study table. Standing before the window, Selina Jo spoke.

"Kin I come in?" she asked softly.

One of the girls screamed slightly; the other, after her first involuntary start of amazement, seemed wonderfully self-possessed.

"Sure, Rube!" she invited cordially. "Step right in!"

Selina Jo climbed over the low window sill into the room.

"What you doin' here?" one of the girls asked.

"I'm j'inin' o' this here re-formin' place," was the unruffled answer.

"You're *wha-a-at?*"

Very simply Selina Jo made known her intentions.

"But you'll be caught, sure as shootin'," one of the girls objected. "In the first place you've got no uniform."

Naturally, Selina Jo expected to be discovered sooner or later; but she had prepared for this eventuality — as she thought.

"Maybe we can fix that," the other girl broke in eagerly.

"There's that old blouse of mine and your extra skirt. Gee! I wish we could put it over! Wouldn't old Iron Jaw be wild?"

Between them they rigged a uniform for Selina Jo. At the nightly inspection she crept under the bed. Later, she slept on a pallet.

The fortunate indisposition of a girl across the hall solved the breakfast problem. Selina Jo, taking the vacant place in the formation, passed undiscovered for the moment.

Among the many contingencies which she could not have provided against, though, were the sharp eyes and keen memory for faces possessed by Mary Shane, the matron in charge. As the girls were forming for certain duties shortly after breakfast, Selina Jo felt a heavy hand upon her shoulder. She looked up into the stern face of the matron.

"What are you doing here?" was the curt inquiry.

"Me?" Selina Jo's attempt at surprise was ludicrous. "I — I b'long here, ma'am."

"You do? You ought to know me then. What is my name?"

Instinct told the girl that this must be the matron. "Old Iron Jaw," she answered unabashed.

Mary Shane smiled grimly. "Come with me," she ordered.

She led the way, Selina Jo following meekly, to her little cubby-hole of an office.

"Now, then," the matron commanded sternly, "tell me the truth. How did you get in here?"

"I — I clumb that fence."

"Why?"

"Just 'cause, ma'am, I nacherly got to git re-formed," was the perfectly serious answer. "I ralely b'long here. I'm so p'izen mean they ain't no other place fitten fer me."

"What's your name?"

Now it came, not hesitantly, but proudly — even defiantly: "S'liny Jo Hudsill!"

Mary Shane knitted her brows thoughtfully: "Hudsill?"

"Yes'm. Them low-down, sneakin', ornery Shoalwater River Hudsills, ma'am. Ever'body in the county knows 'bout 'em. They air the shif'lesses' fambly that ever was borned. An' what's furdermore, I'm the hellraisin'es' one o' the intire gin'ration!"

"What are you trying to tell me, child?"

"Just how tarnation mean I am, ma'am."

In her plans for forcibly entering the reformatory, Selina Jo had hit upon the idea of charging herself, when her presence should be discovered, with an assortment of crimes sufficient to insure her incarceration for an indefinite period. It seemed to her now that the moment for her confession had arrived.

"Last mont', ma'am," she continued earnestly, "I burned down three cow stalls. Right atter that I went inta my own blood uncle's cornfiel' an' pulled up ever' smidgin's bit o' his young corn — pulled it smack up by the roots, ma'am. Ner that ain't all, not nigh all. I almost hate to tell you this'n, ma'am. But last week I stobbed a li'l nigger baby to death. Killed him dead. Dead as ——"

"Hush, child, hush!" the matron ordered. "You did none of those things. Now then: Tell me — the truth!"

It came then — the truth — a story haltingly told of a child's scarcely understood heartache for self-betterment. Selina Jo didn't want to stay in the reformatory long, she said; only long enough to learn all there was in the books. Then she would be willing to leave. She would change her name and go away off somewhere. Maybe the folks there, not knowing that she was a Hudsill, would invite her to a Sunday dinner when she went to meeting.

People, some of them, rather, said of Mary Shane that her long association with the so-called criminally inclined young had rendered her immune to every human emotion.

But as the recital progressed, the matron turned her back suddenly and strode over to a window.

Presently the story was finished.

"An' please, ma'am," a voice was asking hopefully, "I kin stay now, cain't I?"

Mary Shane did not reply for a moment. "I'm afraid not, child," she said presently. Few who thought they knew her would have recognized the matron's voice. "You — you've done nothing to be kept here for. You'll have to go home."

Then it was that Selina Jo's heart broke. She flung herself upon the matron.

"Oh, God, ma'am," she sobbed, "please don't make me go back! I *ain't* goin' back! I don't want to be one o' them low-down Hudsills all o' my endurin' days. I want to be somebody, like other folks is. I don't want to have a passel o' dang li'l old gals lookin' at me slanchwise when I go to meetin'. You don't know what it is, ma'am, to have a hankerin'. I want to be changed! I want to be made diffe'ent! Ma'am, I just *got* to git re-formed!"

May Shane had opened her mouth to speak, to check this outburst; suddenly her iron jaws closed with a snap.

"Come with me, child," she said. "We'll see the superintendent." A moment later she added: "Jim Wellborn generally runs this reformatory to suit himself, anyway!"

The matron was the one person connected with the institution who took whatever liberties she chose. When she wished to be particularly impressive, she addressed people by their full names.

"Jim Wellborn," she said brusquely, as she and Selina Jo entered the superintendent's office, "this girl wants to tell you something. You listen closely."

Wellborn, big and broad-shouldered, had glanced up as they entered. His quizzical glance had rested first upon the girl; now he looked at Mary Shane.

"When you've heard her story," the matron continued,

"if you can't find some way to keep her here so she can learn to live the life that Almighty God has shown her that she's fitted for, why I'll undertake the job of looking after her myself and the reformatory can get another matron."

"Hm-m-m!" Superintendent Wellborn's gray eyes twinkled; but he did not smile outright. "Well . . . the reformatory is fairly well satisfied with its present matron. Good-day, Mary Shane! Sit down, little girl."

The matron closed the door and returned to her office. For nearly an hour she sat, idle, at her desk. It was the first of the month; there were statements to be prepared, reports to be rendered, bills to be checked. But it was patent that her mind was upon none of these things. From time to time she glanced up impatiently at some noise in the hallway. Presently there came the sound of hurrying footsteps. She whirled her chair about.

Selina Jo stood in the doorway. Questions, answers, were unnecessary. The flush in her cheeks, the flame in her sloe-black eyes, blazoned her happiness to the world. As she realized what the superintendent's decision had been, an answering light gleamed, momentarily, in Mary Shane's face. Characteristically, though, it was quenched upon the instant, as she slipped once more, automatically, into her habitual mask of granite.

But even a granite mask — since it is only a mask — cannot stifle a heart song; at best, it can only muffle it. For as she went about the prosaic business of acquainting Selina Jo with her duties, Mary Shane was well aware that, somewhere, deep within herself, a small voice was chanting, chanting over and over:

"For this one — just this one, Lord — who comes of her own accord to be changed, for this single one who wants to be made different, I thank Thee!"

EDGAR VALENTINE SMITH

Edgar Valentine Smith was born February 14, 1875, in Chilton County, Alabama. With the exception of one year

during which he was engaged in the wholesale lumber business in Boston, he has spent his life in his native state where he is now assistant editor of *The Birmingham News*. He was educated in the public schools of Alabama and at Howard College in Birmingham from which he received the degree A.B. in 1896. In 1924 this College conferred upon him the honorary degree of LL.D.

While engaged in the manufacture and selling of yellow pine lumber, he had abundant opportunity to study the "cracker" type in the sawmill camps. When asked how he came to write this story, he said, "The scenes in *Prelude* are laid in West Florida, in that portion of the State that juts out under Alabama. The heroine of the story is to a certain extent real. There was just such a girl in that vicinity who worked in a turpentine orchard at that age. I saw her as a witness in a murder trial at the county seat, and decided then (though I was not writing fiction at the time) that she would be a good character for a story. Of course, the part about her breaking into the reformatory, as well as the rest of her story, is fictional."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Note Mr. Smith's familiarity with the section about which he is writing. *Log rolling, shinny, razorback hogs, stick-and-clay chimneys, corn pone* are words which give local color and convince the reader of the reality of the story. Find other such words or expressions.
2. Point out the details by which the author builds up a complete picture of Selina Jo's sordid home life.
3. What qualities of character distinguish Selina Jo from her family? What is the significance of the incident of the photograph? Of Selina Jo's Sunday at the Briggs settlement? Of her visit to the store?
4. Show how setting and character are interdependent in this story.
5. What is Selina Jo's object in trying to make the matron believe her "the hellraisin'es' one o' the intire gin'ration of Hudsills?"
6. Why is this story called *Prelude?* Why would *Selina Jo after Ten Years* be a good subject for a theme? Imagine

the change in her and decide what you would have her doing.

7. Read Coppée's well-known story *The Substitute.* Compare the opening sentence of *Prelude* with Coppée's, "He was scarcely ten years old when he was first arrested as a vagabond." Note how both stories introduce the principal character and then give his previous life. Show how the element of conflict enters into both stories. In which story is setting more vital to the plot? Which story do you prefer?

Good stories of character and environment:

'Lijah — Edgar Valentine Smith
Cameo — Edgar Valentine Smith
The Gold Brick — Brand Whitlock
A Day Off — Alice Brown
Turkey Red — Frances Gilchrist Wood
Shoes — Frances Gilchrist Wood

A KISS FOR CURTENTY[1]

By ARNOLD BENNETT

Mr. Curtenty lay in bed in the winter morning darkness and reflected upon the horrible injustice of destiny. Mr. Curtenty was a most respectable gentleman — indeed a connection of the celebrated Jos. Curtenty of Longshaw, and, be it admitted, a great deal more dignified than Jos. ever was. He had never done anything wrong; his conscience was sinless. In sixty years his dignity and his respectability had not been even compromised. He could, and he did, look everybody unyielding in the face. By nature and long practice he was intensely proud and independent. All the world addressed him as "Mr." Once he had lost a situation through his employer omitting the "Mr." Of course he had not openly resented the omission, for he was not a fool, but the omission had put him in a frame of mind favorable to quarreling, and a quarrel about some trifle had ensued. Nevertheless he had soon obtained a new situation, which unhappily he had lost through the death of the new employer.

Since that disaster — now rather more than a year ago — he had been workless and therefore wageless. Society seemed to blame him for being sixty years old. The fact that he had no particular trade also counted against him. He had always had posts such as watchman, doorkeeper, time-keeper, inspector — posts which meant doing nothing with dignity. Hence no doubt his feeling of superiority to people who actually did things.

Somehow he could scarce hide this feeling — even from his daughter's husband, who secretly resented it. Jim Crowther was a young miner living at Longshaw, and, in the opinion of Mr. Curtenty, Jim's wife Harriet had mar-

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ried beneath her. Mr. Curtenty was mistaken in supposing that he had concealed this opinion from Jim and Harriet. Every week he disliked Jim and Harriet more and more, because they were contributing to his subsistence. They were not so crude in their methods of charity as to give him money direct. Certainly not. Such clumsiness would have made an everlasting breach between the two generations. Mr. Curtenty knew naught, officially, of any help. Only it invariably happened that when Mr. Curtenty had not a shilling Mrs. Curtenty had ten shillings or so, which she produced as it were apologetically. Mr. Curtenty was diplomatic enough never to inquire whence she had obtained the money. Thus the twelve lean months had run precariously and unsatisfactorily on.

But a crisis was now upon Mr. Curtenty. For his wife had told him that Harriet had told her that Jim had told Harriet that Mrs. Curtenty could go and live with the Crowthers at Longshaw if she liked, and Mr. Curtenty too. And little by little Mr. Curtenty was given to understand that either he must submit to this humiliation or starve. Well, Mr. Curtenty had his pride, and he swore to himself that he would not submit to it. He simply could not imagine himself as a helpless pauper, dependent in the home of his son-in-law. He conveyed his decision to Mrs. Curtenty, and the next thing he heard was that if he wouldn't go she would! Ah! He saw well enough that the notion was to force him into submission!

Two days previously, it being then a Wednesday, Mr. Curtenty had been informed that Mrs. Curtenty would migrate to Longshaw at the end of the week — Saturday. It was now Friday. The supreme catastrophe was indeed shaping. All his life Mr.Curtenty had worried about the future, and his relatives and acquaintances had laughed at him for worrying. But was he not justified by the event? Had he ever been wrong? They twitted him about being miserly. He was not miserly. He had always been careful, and was he not now justified of his carefulness also?

Financially, there was the matter of the Post-Office Savings Bank account. They did not positively accuse him of keeping a private hoard in the Post-Office Savings Bank; but they hinted at it, and no amount of denials would stop their hints.

His ear caught a *puff-puff-puff-puff*, the same being the first irregular coughings of the engine of Clayhanger's Steam Printing Works, which extended from Duck Bank down the opposite side of the lane. These coughings were Mr. Curtenty's morning clock — he had no other, nor watch either. Soon followed the sound of sirens from different parts of the town of Bursley. The hour was seven. Mr. Curtenty slid out of bed from his wife's side and began with deliberation to dress. He did everything with deliberation. He even looked for work — when he looked for it — with deliberation. (But he had an idea that work should look for him.) His nature demanded that he should always have plenty of time in front of him. Time was the basis of dignity; hurry was the enemy of dignity. The first part of his dressing he did in the dark. Then he lit a candle, behind the bed's head, and with a morsel of blacking and an old stumpy brush he softly cleaned his boots — or such poor fragments of them as were left to clean.

A miserable small room, but the totality of Mr. Curtenty's home! Once he had rented a whole house, and could walk from one room to another and go upstairs and downstairs and still be at home. A few pitiable bits of furniture, including the little oil-stove on which his wife cooked their so-called meals! Once she had held sway over a whole kitchen range!

In a dignified way he was sorry for his young and ingenuous, quietly grumbling wife. Not really young, for she was the mother of a mother! But he at thirty had married her at nineteen, and to him she had always remained curiously young. There she lay, on the verge of fifty, and looking to the impartial observer more than

her age — she had had a wearing life; but to him in her tranquil, pathetic sleep she seemed rather like a girl — foolish, reckless, helpless. Yes, he was sorry for her. So she intended on the morrow to migrate to her daughter's at Longshaw, whether he went or not! Unless he yielded, she meant to leave him — leave him to his own devices. It had come to that.

On the old tin tray was just enough bread and dripping and bits of cured fish to last them till the next morning. Thenceforward — the fiat had been issued from Longshaw — there were to be no more supplies. And then what? He knew that his wife was wondering, and Harriet was wondering, and Jim was wondering, what the obstinate, secretive old man would do — what would happen. He alone knew what would happen.

When he had laced his boots under the candle and combed his hair, he extinguished the candle and finished his toilet in the dark. But the dark was now twilight; the earth was revolving as usual and in its revolution bearing Bursley to the dawn. Mr. Curtenty buttoned his greenish jacket, tied an antique woolen muffler round his collarless neck, put on his cap and went forth into Woodisun Lane.

He knew he would be too early. He always was too early. He paced smartly, but with dignity, about Duck Square. A huge tram, packed with people who had work and were going off to do it, rumbled past the Wesleyan Chapel down Duck Bank toward Hanbridge. Mr. Curtenty stamped his feet into the pavement and rubbed his hands, for January mornings are always dank and chill in the Five Towns. Yet while doing this he pretended with dignity not to feel the cold. At last he descried the postman, and returned to the front door of the cottage in which he occupied one room; and he received the postman majestically on the doorstep.

"Good-morning," said the genial postman.

"Good-morning to you," said Mr. Curtenty grandly, and took from the postman a small blue official envelope.

In the privacy of the cottage stairs he opened the envelope. Its contents were quite in order; an authority to withdraw the sum of two shillings and sixpence from the Savings Bank department of the Post Office. Then Mr. Curtenty drew from his breast-pocket a yellow bank-book, which showed that twenty pounds stood to his credit, and he carefully put the withdrawal form within the book and replaced the book in his pocket.

Surely you are not surprised! A prudent man must have something up his sleeve for the last emergencies. Mr. Curtenty had maintained that twenty pounds in reserve throughout a year of privation and humiliation. He had lied about it for a year and more than a year. No matter how terrible a plight you may be in, it is always possible to conceive yourself in a still worse plight. That twenty pounds was Mr. Curtenty's bulwark against the imaginable worse — the fear which had plagued him for forty years. It was the last defense and resource of his independence.

"Where ye been?" asked his waking wife as he reentered their home.

"Getting breath of air," said Mr. Curtenty.

In the evening, about half-past seven, Mrs. Curtenty was lying in bed (for warmth) and Mr. Curtenty was sitting on one of the two chairs, all in the dark, when Mr. Curtenty, after a little shuffling of his legs and scrunching of the chair legs on the bare boards, suddenly rose and felt his way to the door, where his cap and muffler hung on a hook. The pair had had two lean meals and one snack; all the fish was eaten, but not quite all the bread; some tea remained for breakfast. Mr. Curtenty had been abroad once, in the afternoon, and during that period he had cashed the warrant for two shillings and sixpence. Whether or not his wife had gone out in the same interval he did not know. They had scarcely spoken to each other — not from unfriendliness, but from habit. Not a word had been said about the morrow, or Mr. Curtenty's inten-

tion regarding the morrow. Mrs. Curtenty had not dared to challenge him on the great matter. Indeed he could not safely be challenged.

Mrs. Curtenty thought to herself now, as she sometimes remarked to her daughter:

"Things'll work themselves out if you leave 'em alone."

This was her philosophy in face of Mr. Curtenty's terrible estranging dignity and independence. All she said was, as Mr. Curtenty fumbled at the door:

"Where ye going?"

And all he replied was:

"A breath of air."

He left without looking at the companion of his life. Even if he had looked at her, he could not have seen her in the darkness. Still, he might have lit the last inch of candle for a few seconds and looked at her, for the moment was one of farewell after a companionship of thirty years. But his sentimental emotions had been numbed, frozen, by misfortune, by spiritual pride, by privation, by secretiveness, by hidden anger against fate and by self-righteousness. So he just went. He knew that his young wife would fall asleep and stay asleep.

It was a raw night in Woodisun Lane and a muddy.

He had not meant to visit the Free Reference Library in the Wedgewood Institution, but as a measure of precaution he decided to do so. He was at home in that warm refuge of the unemployed, the Wedgewood Institution. The horrid, stuffy, damp smell of the Reference Library delighted his nose. After the usual formalities he obtained Quain's "Dictionary of Medicine," and, taking the thick volume to a desk, he turned over its pages with the deliberate majesty of a vicar searching in the Bible for the lesson appointed to be read.

His brain was absolutely clear. He was not out of his mind, nor out of any part of his mind. Under no circumstances would he migrate to his son-in-law's. His wife might go; she indeed would go; and she would be

happy there, or at least contented. The twenty pounds (less two shillings and sixpence) which he had guarded for an ultimate contingency would be useless to him, because too soon exhausted. He might, of course, fend for himself, all alone, for a time on the twenty pounds; but if he did so his family would know for sure that he had had a secret hoard after all, and he could not bear the revelation; it would too seriously humiliate him. Moreover, when the twenty pounds was gone — what then? Merely the same crucial, unanswerable problem as now! No! He had had enough, and there could be but one answer to the insistent question, "To be or not to be?"

Quain was perfectly explicit: "*The soluble cyanides, more especially the cyanide of potassium, largely used by photographers and by electroplaters, are common articles of commerce, and produce the same deadly results as the acid itself. The fatal dose of prussic acid is the equivalent of less than one grain of the anhydrous acid.*"

Nothing could be simpler to the understanding. He had read it before, but he wished to refresh his memory and so avoid the possibility of blunder. He refrained from proceeding to read about the effect of poison; he had read that also before; it was rather disturbing, sensational.

He closed the stately tome and grandly handed it back across the counter to the pert young thing in a jumper who had dominion there. None could have guessed, as he calmly descended the broad steps of the Institution, that he was solemnly marked out and divided that night from every other soul in the town.

He made his way to Critchlow's in St. Luke's Square. Critchlow was the oldest chemist in Bursley. He knew Critchlow slightly — a sardonic and antique being who would as lief as not sell poison to a customer who he guessed meant to drink it.

Critchlow's, however, was closed. Monstrous that the shop should be closed on that night of all nights! Holl's clock across the Square showed six minutes to eight, and

Critchlow's had no right to be closed until eight. But Critchlow's was closed. The old fellow was allowing himself to become a bit capricious in his latter years.

Mr. Curtenty had purposely driven the transaction as late as convenient, for he desired a deserted, nocturnal town for his mortal work; but he now saw the possibility of having cut the thing too fine. Still, there was Salter's in the Market Place — all on the way to the empty playground, beyond the Town Hall, which he had selected for his end. He walked to the top of the Square and turned to the right where the Market Place was. He had an idea that Salter's kept open till nine o'clock. Salter's was open, and he entered the shop, which happened to be empty — behind the counter as well as in front of it.

Salter's was the new drug-store in Bursley. The interior of the shop had been expensively refurnished from floor to high ceiling. It shone; it glittered; it was orderly; it was the cleanest thing in Bursley; it had an antiseptic, tonic odor; its clock was accurate; it offered chairs, mirrors and a weighing-machine for the use of customers. It displayed more tooth-brushes than a quarter of a century earlier had been employed in the whole of Bursley. Mr. Curtenty was not impressed. He had the native's distaste for and suspicion of all that was showy and that was not ramshackle.

A fine young gentleman, Mr. Salter himself (no apron) appeared from the dark rear of the establishment, glided along the length of the counter and became a note of interrogation to Mr. Curtenty, whose tongue — very surprisingly — clave to his palate and whose throat grew parched.

"I want some Scheele's acid" (the trade name of the anhydrous prussic).

Mr. Salter stared hard at Mr. Curtenty, and Mr. Curtenty, invigorated and challenged by the stare, returned it.

"Photographic work?"

Mr. Curtenty nodded. "Aye!"

"How much?"

"Dun know. Smallish bottle."

"Half a pint?"

"Aye, that'll do."

"I'll get you to sign the poison-book."

"Aye!"

Mr. Salter moved about behind the counter and in a startlingly brief space of time was slapping a salmon-tinted poison label on a corked bottle. (Never within Mr. Curtenty's experience had seconds passed so quickly.) The next instant he had screwed the bottle into a bit of wrapping-paper, and he was in the act of handing it to Mr. Curtenty when an important-looking woman entered the shop and Mr. Salter turned to her with eager yet dignified deference, excusing himself negligently to Mr Curtenty.

But Mr. Curtenty held the bottle. He held it victoriously; and it was no longer a bottle in a bit of paper — it was a sacred phial, magic, omnipotent, more powerful than man and than God. It held the key to the riddle of the future and the short answer to the arguments of the past. It gave Mr. Curtenty a sense of absolutism, of independence, of dignity, of conquest over earth, such as he had never had. It rendered Mr. Curtenty heroic, magnificent. Already he was leaving earth. He had no interest in earth; he was sick of it, disgusted with it.

He yearned bitterly to be quit of it. He had little or no fear, for fear presumes imagination, and he had little or no imagination. He forgot the teachings of religion and the wrath of God, or, if he remembered them, remembered them only to despise them. He was the supreme egotist. He thought of nobody but himself. He was absorbed in himself. Some faint vision of an inquest flickered transiently through his brain. He sniggered at it and it vanished. He was triumphant. He was a hero, a conqueror, a poet. He was God.

"One and twopence, please," murmured Mr. Salter, between two respectful sentences addressed to the distinguished customer.

"*One and twopence!*" cried Mr. Curtenty, dropping the half-crown which he was holding suspended in midpocket. "*One and twopence!* Why! It hadn't ought to be more than tenpence halfpenny!"

"But I'm afraid it's one and two," said Mr. Salter calmly.

"Not me!" Mr. Curtenty growled with finality, and, dropping the bottle onto the round India-rubber mat intended to receive coins, he walked with fury and grandeur out of the shop.

He muttered things to himself. Did Salter suppose that *he* was going to pay for all the fal-lals and gimcrackery of his new shop? Not him! They called him a miser and skinflint. They might. But fair was fair, and impudence was impudence.

Impudence, that's what it was! Impudence! Let Mr. Salter charge his one and twopence to them as had quarterly bills and wouldn't pay cash. But not to *him!* He knew to a certainty that Freeson, the "cash chemist" in Hanbridge, the great price-cutter, would sell him half a pint of Scheele's acid for tenpence, if not ninepence halfpenny. And to Freeson's he would go. Freeson's did not close until ten o'clock. Freeson was a hard-working man who toiled early and late. Impudence! Impudence!

People passing in the market-place heard and saw Mr. Curtenty muttering and chuntering to himself. He noticed with resentment that he was observed, and walked off in the direction of Hanbridge.

Woodisun Lane is one of the ways from Bursley to Hanbridge. Indeed from Bursley Market-Place it is shortest and the oldest way, but by far the worst way. However, Mr. Curtenty took it, in order by a glance at the window of his home to see whether Mrs. Curtenty was wastefully burning the last inch of the candle. She was not.

The window gave no sign of light. Strange to say, Mrs. Curtenty's thriftiness disappointed him, because he wanted another grievance, he wanted dozens of grievances, to gather into his breast as St. Sebastian gathered arrows.

He had to be content with the one great grievance against Mr. Salter — Mr. Salter who by his rapacity was forcing a determined and desperate man to walk unnecessarily over to Hanbridge on a dank night. Soon, by dint of reflection and savage concentration, the grievance swelled till it filled his whole mind and heart and soul.

Nearly at the top of the hill, at Bleakridge, Woodisun Lane debouches into the main thoroughfare, Trafalgar Road. Somewhat farther on is the football ground, where Bursley had never yet defeated Knype, and then there is a corner upon which had stood for centuries a small earthenware factory — one small factory succeeding another there from Plantagenet times onward. Young Eddie Colclough had recently razed a small factory to the ground and was just finishing the erection of a new one of an experimental type wherein various modern dodges of economic organization were to be tested.

As he passed the building Mr. Curtenty's watchman's nose sniffed the air, in the manner of a tiger sniffing distant blood. Mr. Curtenty became a nose and nothing but a nose; and his grievance and his purpose were equally forgotten. It might be said that Mr. Curtenty had no trade; but that he had a profession was richly demonstrated in that sniffing moment. He sniffed the night-watchman's arch foe — smoke, indicating fire.

He looked at the façade, whose upper windows were still unglazed, and could see no curling wisp of smoke. But he had faith in his nose. Though the gates of the large central archway had not yet been put in place, the archway was stoutly boarded, and Mr. Curtenty could not get through it. He ran along and climbed a rough fence at the side of the factory, and so reached the back, which was less securely protected than the front from marauders.

The next instant he was in the strewn yard. And his nose was justified, for he saw smoke meandering furtively, ominously, from a first-floor window. And his eye detected a faint glow within.

Mr. Curtenty was gloriously alive. The price of Scheele's acid was nothing to him. He was professionally inspired. He was happy in the midst of calamity and conflagration. He knew the first thing to do and the second thing to do and did not hesitate a moment. In a quarter of a minute he was in Trafalgar Road again. A policeman, a policeman, to take charge! But there was no policeman. In the Five Towns, so different from other localities, when you are engaged in the practice of virtue and philanthropy there never is a policeman within a mile; it is only when you happen to be delinquent that policemen spring magically out of the earth. There was nobody except three giggling and shrieking girls, arms mutually entwined round necks, swinging along the oozy pavement. Mr. Curtenty ignored them. But at the corner of the tiny square, in front of Bleakridge's yellow church, burned a real lamp. Doctor Ackerington's, of course! Mr. Curtenty, forgetting dignity, and yet somehow preserving it, ran to the house and violently rang the bell. He rang it three times with increasing violence.

The door opened.

"'Ere! You're in a 'urry," said a stern, fat, middle-aged maid in a cap and apron, as soon as she had satisfied herself that Mr. Curtenty did not belong to the ruling class.

"'Ave ye got the telephone here?" Mr. Curtenty demanded stiffly.

"And if we have, you can't use it!"

"Who wants for to use it? You tell your master or missus as Colclough's new pot bank's afire, and they mun telephone for the fire brigade." And as the maid, startled and impressed and stricken, did not immediately move, he added: "And look slippy!" Then he ran off.

Within the yard of the works once more, he descried in the darkness what looked like a mound of sand. He put his hand into it. It *was* a mound of sand. Seizing one of several buckets which the builder's men had left, he filled it with sand and searched for and found stairs and gingerly mounted them in the black darkness, and guided by his triumphant nose he passed through a corridor and into a large suffocating room, which room was illuminated by the fire.

Planks of wood were just beginning to crackle. With the sand he smothered their ardor. But there was not enough sand. He descended again, with empty bucket, bungled the stairs, fell, hurt his ankle, swore, limped, got more sand, ascended. After three such ascents he had extinguished the fire and was in darkness. But he had seen enough to decide the origin of the fire. The usual thing! Workmen's negligence. They had been bivouacking in the room, they had made a fire in the grateless hearth — one of your sprawling fires — and they had not put it out on leaving. A few embers had reached a plank leaning at a broad angle against the mantelpiece, had patiently attacked the root of the plank — a slow business, but in the end successful; the plank, deprived of its base, had fallen sideways on to a heap of other planks. And so on. Had not the entire place sweated with damp it might have been a heap of ruins at the moment when Mr. Salter's rapacity had driven Mr. Curtenty in the direction of Hanbridge.

Mr. Curtenty, his occupation gone, limped through other corridors and rooms until he saw the light of Trafalgar Road lamps through an unglazed window. He looked out, himself unseen. A crowd, small but increasing, was gazing stolidly up at the façade of the works. It could perceive nothing of interest; it had no impulse to do anything; it merely gazed, in the faint hope of witnessing some terrible catastrophe. No policemen! No fire-engine! A tramcar roared by, unheeding. Mr. Curtenty con-

tinued to look out, proud, patient, invisible, scornful of the crowd. He was triumphant — nearly as triumphant as he had been fifty minutes earlier when he held the sacred phial in his hand. What a world! What destiny!

The expectant crowd in the mire was in due course rewarded by the exciting arrival, from Hanbridge way, of a motor-car full of people — Eddie Colclough, a young newly married wife, and friends. Doctor Ackerington being out, Mrs. Ackerington had telephoned not only to the fire brigade, but to Eddie, who lived at Cauldon, between Hanbridge and Oldcastle. Mr. and Mrs. Eddie were entertaining at dinner two gentlemen and a lady, and, all being young and adventurous, they had instantly decided to leave dinner and come in a body to the scene of the announced conflagration.

Mr. Curtenty, seeing them and guessing that Mr. Colclough must be among them, went downstairs with pain in his ankle. Eddie, followed by Mrs. Eddie and the others, was in the yard almost before him.

"Where's the fire?" Mr. Colclough demanded fiercely, in bewilderment; he was intensely relieved to see no evidence of a fire, but also — rather illogically — annoyed to see no evidence of a fire.

"It ain't anywhere. I've put it out," answered Mr. Curtenty coldly, challengingly.

"And who the devil are you, anyway?" cried Mr. Colclough, who was of an aggressive and hasty disposition.

"Mr. Curtenty's my name," said Mr. Curtenty, "and if you'll come upstairs I'll show ye a thing or two." His tone gave pause to Mr. Colclough, and at the same time allayed Mr. Colclough's rising suspicion of the rumor of fire.

"Strike a match," ordered Mr. Colclough at the dark stairs, feeling vainly in his pockets.

"I dunna' smoke," said Mr. Curtenty grimly.

However, one of the others had an electric flashlight. The six of them stood in the scene of the conflagration, and

heard Mr. Curtenty's description of the great episode — how he was passing, how he gave the alarm, how he sent for the fire brigade, how he used the sand, how he sprained his ankle, and how all's well that ends well — the whole recital being supported by charred timber and the heavy odor of wood smoke.

The ray of the electric flash lighted Mr. Curtenty's smoke-grimed face. The rest of them — the fashionable aristocracy, including two young and beautiful women — were in shadow. Mr. Curtenty's tale was faultless. It extorted admiration — a little unwillingly, perhaps, from Eddie Colclough — but spontaneous enough from the others, and especially from the women.

"Well, here's something for you," said Mr. Colclough, and handed Mr. Curtenty a sovereign.

"Thank ye."

"You must be used to fires," said Mrs. Colclough, smiling warmly.

Mr. Curtenty majestically offered some of his personal history.

"And who are you working for now?" asked Mr. Colclough.

"I'm out of work," said Mr. Curtenty.

Mr. Colclough paused.

"What did you say your name was?"

"Mr. Curtenty."

"Well, look here, Curtenty," said Mr. Colclough, and paused again, as though hesitating in his mind.

Mr. Curtenty did not repine at the rough, careless omission of the "Mr." Experience had been teaching him.

"Look here, Curtenty. There's no watchman here yet. Do you want a job?"

Mr. Curtenty was engaged on the spot.

Suddenly he hurried from the room. The others followed him. The electric torch lighted him from behind. His ears had been copying the excellent example of his

nose. He reached one of the front unglazed windows and put his head through a square. A fire-engine had arrived with an enormous fluster and buster and glint of brass helmets. A fine effort on the part of the Bursley Fire Brigade — forty minutes! Mr. Curtenty bawled angrily, disdainfully, to the brigade.

"It's out. Get away with yer sprinklin'-machine. It's out, I'm a-tellin' on ye!"

Then he turned and faced the flashlight.

"You perfect *duck!*" exclaimed young Mrs. Colclough, and — carried away by gratitude for a great deed and her youthful sentimentalism and the general influence of a honeymoon and the comicality of Mr. Curtenty's dirty tweed cap — in all her beauty and all her finery she put her ringed hands on the shoulders of the old man and kissed his sooty plain face.

In Duck Square (which is really only a bit of Duck Bank and not a square at all) there is an establishment (not to be confused with the Borough Dining-rooms two doors off) which stays open till a late hour nightly, brilliantly lit amid the surrounding gloom, and which exudes from its interior an odor so appetizing and powerful that it has been known to interfere with the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting in the Wesleyan Chapel a hundred yards away on the opposite side of Trafalgar Road.

Mr. Curtenty entered this establishment and, pulling half-a-crown from his pocket, bought two plenteous portions of the finest fried fish. He then bought a candle, though candles were not in her line of business, from the white-clad proprietress, who gave him a few matches into the bargain. Then he went across to the fast-closing Dragon Hotel and in the nick of time bought a bottle of beer. Having unlocked the door of the cottage in Woodisun Lane with his own key, he took off his boots at the bottom of the stairs, struck a light, and proceeded upward, heavily encumbered, into his one-room home.

Young Mrs. Curtenty was fast asleep — the blaze of

the candle did not awaken her. He examined her face with a new interest. His heart was loudly beating (but that, of course, was the effect of the stairs — what else could it be?). He was vaguely aware, too, of a nonfleshy throbbing, a quaking, a half-pleasant, half-frightening general disturbance in his mind or his soul or somewhere. He could not quite surely identify the phenomenon. It might have been some imperfect realization of the dread fact that but for the accident of a fire he would at that moment have been somewhere else or nowhere at all and nothing at all. On the other hand it might be due to alarm at his own wild and reckless expenditure in the fried-fish shop and the Dragon Hotel.

It was the heavenly odor of the fried fish that first caused his wife to dream a delicious dream and then woke her. As her senses gradually brought her back into the sphere of reality, she opened her ingenuous eyes and saw Mr. Curtenty bending over her, candle in hand. The memory of Mrs. Colclough's kiss was now the chief thing in Mr. Curtenty's mind. It somehow thrilled him, and it somehow took thirty years off Mrs. Curtenty's age.

"Rally thysen up," said Mr. Curtenty in a tone so startlingly new and attractive to Mrs. Curtenty that she could not move.

He wanted to bend down and embrace her, but was prevented by an unconquerable complex that held him fast and told him not to be ridiculous.

"Rally thysen up," he repeated, "and put the blanket round thy shoulders."

"Jimmy," said she hopefully, "then us'll go to Harriet's at Longshaw to-morrow?"

"Not me!"

"I shall," she said sadly. "They'll make me. Aye, lad! I'm going, I am!" She sighed.

"Thee isna'," he almost shouted. "I've gotten a job. Rally up and set this 'ere fish on a platter."

She raised herself on her elbows and kissed him — *she*

had no forbidding complex. The kiss was what he wanted. This kiss was the second in one hour, and the second in perhaps six months or more. And the lips were cool and fresh as Mrs. Colclough's. And the kiss had a quality mysteriously surpassing that of Mrs. Colclough's.

Mr. Curtenty felt himself obliged for form's sake to show impatience at the salute.

"'Ere," he grunted. "Thou'rt shakin' candle-grease all o'er th' bed."

Nevertheless he himself adjusted the blanket round his wife's exposed arms and neck.

ARNOLD BENNETT

THE novel-reading public is as intimately acquainted with the Five Towns of Arnold Bennett's stories as with the Wessex of Thomas Hardy or the Sussex of Sheila Kaye-Smith. In one of these North Staffordshire towns Mr. Bennett was born in 1867 and there spent his early life. After a brief time devoted to the study of law, Mr. Bennett adopted journalism as a profession, and has since become one of the best-known as well as one of the most prolific English writers. Novels, short stories, plays, newspaper and magazine articles, books on self-improvement have flowed from his pen unceasingly. A favorite literary controversy rages about the question of Arnold Bennett's rank as an artist; one critic accuses him of "pot-boiling" to the detriment of his art; another calls him a great realist with a keen insight into the deeper meanings of life. This question we may leave the critics — and the next hundred years — to settle. In the meantime, if the reader wishes to know more of Arnold Bennett, let him read *Tales of the Five Towns*, a collection of stories, and *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger*, two of his best novels.

The story which has been selected for his volume is one of Mr. Bennett's very recent tales of the Five Towns. While it lacks somewhat the repression of style which characterizes his best work, it lacks also the grimness of such stories as *The Idiot* or *A Letter Home*. Its charm lies in the unusualness of the situation; a stolid, taciturn man sets forth to end his life, walks from shop to shop in search of a bargain in Scheele's acid, meets fate in the smell of fire, has the suppressed romance in his soul

quickened to life by a kiss, and goes home to his wife bearing gold and frankincense and myrrh in the form of a job and hot fried fish with a bottle of beer from the Dragon Hotel.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The Five Towns which Arnold Bennett has made his own particular field are pottery-manufacturing centers in northern England. Bursley, Hanbridge, Knype, Longshaw, and Turnhill — these are the names in thin disguise of five towns in which pottery spells life for the inhabitants. Bursley, in which our story takes place, "prided itself on possessing a unique dignity as 'Mother of the Five Towns,'" Hanbridge, toward which Mr. Curtenty was walking when he scented the fire, was the Chicago of the Five Towns. "a bit doing there, by all accounts." The Honorable Joseph Curtenty of Longshaw, to whom our Mr. Curtenty was related, appears in another of Mr. Bennett's stories. Dignity and respectability must have run in the Curtenty family. The Honorable Joseph "was Deputy-Mayor, and Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of the Town Council; he was also a Guardian of the Poor, a Justice of the Peace, President of the Society for the Prosecution of Felons, an Oddfellow, and several other things that meant dining, shrewdness, and good-nature." Clayhanger's Steam Printing Works on Duck Bank, which waked Mr. Curtenty with its siren, is well-known to readers of Arnold Bennett's novels.
2. The story opens when "a crisis was now upon Mr. Curtenty." What was this crisis? How had the crisis been precipitated by the fact that Mr. Curtenty was "by nature and long practice intensely proud and independent?" How has he been secretly preparing for such a crisis? Do you suspect his purpose when he visits the Free Reference Library? Is it probable that a man planning such a tragic act would clean his "poor fragments" of boots before going out? Is the incident at Salter's Pharmacy consistent with what we already know of Mr. Curtenty? Tell the story of the fire in Colclough's pottery. How does the conclusion of the story satisfy you?

3. In studying the character of Mr. Curtenty discuss the significance of the following sentences —
   a. "All the world addressed him as 'Mr.'"
   b. "He even looked for work — when he looked for it — with deliberation."
   c. "But he at thirty had married her at nineteen, and to him she had always remained curiously young."
   d. "It might be said that Mr. Curtenty had no trade; but that he had a profession was richly demonstrated in that sniffing moment."
   e. "The memory of Mrs. Colclough's kiss — somehow thrilled him, and it somehow took thirty years off Mrs. Curtenty's age."
4. In another story Mr. Bennett speaks of the temperament of the Five Towns as a "fearful and strange compound of pride, obstinacy, unconquerableness, romance, and stupidity." Can you prove from the story that Mr. Curtenty possessed any of these qualities?
5. The English hate to be caught in the act of showing sentiment. Read *The Inconsiderate Waiter*, by Barrie, and see how this national characteristic dictates the London clubman's story as well as it explains Mr. Curtenty's words, "'Ere! Thou'rt shaking candle-grease all o'er the bed." How does Galsworthy's story in this collection emphasize this trait?
6. The experience at the fire provided sentimental young Mrs. Colclough with a good story. Try writing her account as she would give it at her next dinner party.

Other stories by Arnold Bennett:
The Idiot
The Dog
A Letter Home
From one Generation to Another

THE MAN WHO KEPT HIS FORM[1]

By JOHN GALSWORTHY

In these days every landmark is like Alice's flamingo-croquet-mallet — when you refer to it, the creature curls up into an interrogation mark and looks into your face; and every cornerstone resembles her hedgehog-croquet-ball, which, just before you can use it, gets up and walks away. The old flavors of life are out of fashion, the old scents considered stale; "gentleman" is a word to sneer at, and "form" a sign of idiocy.

And yet there are families in the British Isles in which gentility has persisted for hundreds of years, and though you may think me old-fashioned and romantic, I am convinced that such gentlefolk often have a certain quality, a kind of inner pluck bred in them, which is not to be despised at all.

This is why I tell you my recollections of Miles Ruding.

My first sight of him — if a new boy may look at a monitor — was on my rather wretched second day at a Public School. The three other pups who occupied an attic with me had gone out, and I was ruefully considering whether I had a right to any wall-space on which to hang two small oleographs depicting very scarlet horsemen on very bay horses, jumping very brown hedges, which my mother had bought me, thinking they might be suitable to the manly taste for which Public Schools are celebrated. I had taken them out of my playbox, together with the photographs of my parents and eldest sister, and spread them all on the window-seat. I was gazing at the little show lugubriously when the door was opened by a boy in "tails."

[1] From *Captures;* copyright, 1923, by Charles Scribner's Sons. By permission of the publishers.

"Hallo!" he said. "You new?"

"Yes," I answered in a mouselike voice.

"I'm Ruding. Head of the House. You get an allowance of two bob weekly when it's not stopped. You'll see the fagging lists on the board. You don't get any fagging the first fortnight. What's your name?"

"Bartlet."

"Oh! Ah!" he examined a piece of paper in his hand. "You're one of mine. How are you getting on?"

"Pretty well."

"That's all right." He seemed about to withdraw, so I asked him hastily: "Please, am I allowed to hang these pictures?"

"Rather — any pictures you like. Let's look at them!" He came forward. When his eyes fell on the array, he said abruptly: "Oh! Sorry!" and, taking up the oleos, he turned his back on the photographs. A new boy is something of a psychologist out of sheer fright, and when he said "Sorry!" because his eyes had fallen on the effigies of my people, I felt somehow that he couldn't be a beast. "You got these at Tompkins'," he said. "I had the same my first term. Not bad. I should put 'em up here."

While he was holding them to the wall I took a "squint" at him. He seemed to me of a fabulous height — about five feet ten, I suppose; thin, and bolt upright. He had a stick-up collar — "barmaids" had not yet come in — but not a very high one, and his neck was rather long. His hair was peculiar, dark and crisp, with a reddish tinge; and his dark-gray eyes were small and deep in, his cheekbones rather high, his cheeks thin and touched with freckles. His nose, chin, and cheekbones all seemed a little large for his face as yet. If I may put it so, there was a sort of unfinished finish about him. But he looked straight, and had a nice smile.

"Well, young Bartlet," he said, handing me back the pictures, "buck up, and you'll be all right."

I put away my photographs, and hung the oleos.

Ruding! The name was familiar. Among the marriages in my family pedigree, such as "— daughter of Fitzherbert," "daughter of Tastborough," occurred the entry: "daughter of Ruding" — some time before the Civil War. Daughter of Ruding! This demigod might be a far-off kinsman. But I felt I should never dare to tell him of the coincidence.

Miles Ruding was not brilliant, but pretty good at everything. He was not well dressed — you did not think of dress in connection with him either one way or the other. He was not exactly popular — being reserved, far from showy, and not rich — but he had no "side," and never either patronized or abused his juniors. He was not indulgent to himself or others, but he was very just; and, unlike many monitors, seemed to take no pleasure in "whopping." He never fell off in "trials" at the end of a term, and was always playing as hard at the finish of a match as at the start. One would have said he had an exacting conscience, but he was certainly the last person to mention such a thing. He never showed his feelings, yet he never seemed trying to hide them, as I used always to be. He was greatly respected without seeming to care; an independent, self-dependent bird, who would have cut a greater dash if he hadn't been so, as it were, uncreative. In all those two years I only had one at all intimate talk with him, which, after all, was perhaps above the average number, considering the difference in our ages. In my fifth term and Ruding's last but one, there had been some disciplinary rumpus in the house, which had hurt the dignity of the captain of the football "torpid" eleven — a big Irish boy who played back and was the mainstay of the side. It happened on the eve of our first house match, and the sensation may be imagined when this important person refused to play; physically and spiritually sore, he declared for the part of Achilles and withdrew to his tent. The house rocked with pro and con. My sympathies, in common with nearly all below the second fifth, lay with

Donelly against the sixth form. His defection had left me captain of the side, so that the question whether we could play at all depended on me. If I declared a sympathetic strike, the rest would follow. That evening, after long hours of "*fronde*" with other rebellious spirits, I was alone and still in two minds, when Ruding came into my room. He leaned against the door, and said: "Well, Bartlet, *you're* not going to rat?"

"I — I don't think Donelly ought to have been — been whopped," I stammered.

"That's as may be," he said, "but the house comes first. You know that."

Torn between the loyalties, I was silent.

"Look here, young Bartlet," he said suddenly, "it'll be a disgrace to us all, and it hangs on you

"All right," I said sulkily, "I'll play."

"Good chap!"

"But I don't think Donelly ought to have been whopped," I repeated inanely; "he's — he's too big."

Ruding approached till he looked right down on me in my old "froust," as we called armchairs. "One of these days," he said slowly, "you'll be head of the house yourself. You'll have to keep up the prestige of the sixth form. If you let great louts like Donelly cheek little weak sixformers with impunity" (I remember how impressed I was by the word), "you'll let the whole show down. My old governor runs a district in Bengal, about as big as Wales, entirely on prestige. He's often talked to me about it. I hate whopping anybody, but I'd much rather whop a lout like Donelly than I would a little new chap. He's a swine, anyway, for turning the house down because his back is sore."

"It isn't that," I said, "it — it wasn't just."

"If it was unjust," said Ruding, with what seems to me now extraordinary patience, "then the whole system's wrong, and that's a pretty big question, young Bartlet. Anyway, it's not for me to decide. I've got to administer

what is. Shake hands, and do your damnedest to-morrow, won't you?"

I put out my hand with a show of reluctance, though secretly won over.

We got an awful hiding, but I can still hear Ruding's voice yelling: "Well played, Bartlet! Well pla-a-ayed!"

I have only one other school recollection of Miles Ruding which lets any real light in on him. On the day he left for good I happened to travel up to Town in the same carriage. He sat looking through the window back at the old Hill, and I distinctly saw a tear run down his cheek. He must have been conscious that I had remarked the phenomenon, for he said suddenly:

"Damn! I've got a grit in my eye," and began to pull the eyelid down in a manner which did not deceive me in the least.

I then lost sight of him completely for several years. His people were not well off, and he did not go up to the 'Varsity. He once said to me: "My family's beastly old, and beastly poor."

It was during one of my Odysseys in connection with sport that I saw him again. He was growing fruit on a ranch in Vancouver Island. Nothing used to strike a young Englishman traveling in the Colonies more than the difference between what he saw and what all printed matter led him to expect. When I ran across Ruding in the Club at Victoria and he invited me to stay with him, I expected rows of fine trees with large pears and apples hanging on them, a colonial house with a broad verandah, and Ruding in ducks, among rifles and fishing rods, and spirited horses. What I found was a bare new wooden house, not yet painted, in a clearing of the heavy forest. His fruit trees had only just been planted, and he would be lucky if he got a crop within three years. He wore, not white ducks, but blue jeans, and worked about twelve hours a day, felling timber and clearing fresh ground. He had one horse to ride and drive, and got off for a day's

shooting or fishing about once a month. He had three Chinese boys working under him, and lived nearly as sparingly as they. He had been out of England eight years, and this was his second venture — the first in Southern California had failed after three years of drought. He would be all right for water here, he said; which seemed likely enough in a country whose rainfall is superior to that of England.

"How the devil do you stand the loneliness?" I said.

"Oh! one gets used to it. Besides, this isn't lonely — good Lord, no! You should see some places!"

Living this sort of life, he yet seemed exactly what he used to be — in fact, he had kept his form. He didn't precisely dress for dinner, but he washed. He had English papers sent out to him, and read Victorian poetry, and history natural and unnatural, in the evenings over his pipe. He shaved every day, had his cold tub every morning, and treated his Chinese boys just as he used to treat us new boys at school; so far as I could tell, they seemed to have for him much the feelings we used to have — a respect not amounting to fear, and a liking not quite rising to affection.

"I couldn't live here without a woman," I said one evening.

He sighed. "I don't want to mess myself up with anything short of a wife; and I couldn't ask a girl to marry me till the place is fit for her. This fruit-growing's always a gamble at first."

"You're an idealist," I said.

He seemed to shrink, and it occurred to me suddenly that if there were anything he hated, it would be a generalization like that. But I was in a teasing mood.

"You're keeping up the prestige of the English gentleman."

His teeth gritted on his pipe-stem. "I'm dashed if I'm keeping up anything except my end; that's quite enough."

"And exactly the same thing," I murmured.

He turned away. I felt he was much annoyed with me for trying to introduce him to self-consciousness. And he was right! It's destructive; and his life held too many destructive elements — silence, solitude, distance from home, and this daily mixing with members of an Eastern race. I used to watch the faces of his Chinese boys — remote as cats, wonderfully carved, and old, and self-sufficient. I appreciate now how much of what was carved and old and self-sufficient Ruding needed in himself to live year in, year out, alone among them, without losing his form. All that week of my visit I looked with diabolical curiosity for some sign of deterioration — of the coarsening or softening which one felt ought naturally to come of such a life. Honestly, I could not find a trace, save that he wouldn't touch whisky, as if he were afraid of it, and shied away at any mention of women.

"Aren't you ever coming home?" I asked when I was taking leave.

"When I've made good here," he said, "I shall come back and marry."

"And then out again?"

"I expect so. I've got no money, you know."

Four years later I happened to see the following in *The Times:* "Ruding — Fuljambe: At St. Thomas's, Market Harborough, Miles Ruding of Bear Ranch, Vancouver Island, to Blanche, daughter of Charles Fuljambe, J.P., Market Harborough." So it seemed he *had* made good! But I wondered what "daughter of Fuljambe" would make of it out there. Well, I came across Ruding and his wife that very summer at Eastbourne, where they were spending the butt end of their long honeymoon. She was pleasant, pretty, vivacious — too vivacious I felt when I thought of Bear Ranch; and Ruding himself, under the stimulus of his new venture, was as nearly creative as I ever saw him. We dined and bathed, played tennis and went riding on the Downs together. Daughter of Ful-

jambe was quite "a sport" — though, indeed, in 1899 that word had hardly come into use. I confess to wondering why, exactly, she had married my friend, till she gave me the history of it one evening. It seems their families were old neighbors, and when Ruding came back after having been away in the New World for twelve years, he was something of a curiosity, if not of a hero. He had been used to take her out hunting when she was a small child, so that she had an old-time reverence for him. He seemed, in his absence of small-talk and "side," superior to the rattle-pated young men about her — here daughter of Fuljambe gave me a sidelong glance — and one day he had done a thing which toppled her into his arms. She was to go to a fancy dress ball one evening as a Chinese lady. But in the morning a cat upset a bottle of ink over her dress and reduced it to ruin. What was to be done? All the elaborate mask of make-up and head-dressing, which she had rehearsed to such perfection, sacrificed for want of a dress to wear it with! Ruding left that scene of desolation possessed by his one great creative impulse. It seemed that he had in London a Chinese lady's dress which he had brought home with him from San Francisco. No trains from Market Harborough could possibly get him up to Town and back in time, so he had promptly commandeered the only neighboring motor car, driven it up at a rate which must have approached forty miles an hour — a really fabulous speed for those days — got the dress, sent daughter of Fuljambe a wire, motored back at the same furious pace, and appeared before her door with the dress at eight forty-five. Daughter of Fuljambe received him in her dressing-gown, with her hair combed up and her face beautifully painted. Ruding said quietly: "Here you are; it's the genuine thing," and disappeared before she had time to thank him. The dress was superior to the one the cat had spoiled. That night she accepted him. "Miles didn't properly propose to me," she said; "I saw he couldn't bear to, because of what he'd done, so I just

had to tell him not to keep his form so awfully. And here we are! He *is* a dear, isn't he?"

In his dealings with her he certainly was, for she was a self-centred little person.

They went off to Vancouver Island in September. The following January I heard that he had joined a Yeomanry contingent and gone out to fight the Boers. He left his wife in England with her people on his way. I met her once or twice before he was invalided home with enteric. She told me that she had opposed his going, till she found out it was making him quite miserable. "And yet, you know," she said, "he's really frightfully devoted."

When he recovered they went back to Vancouver Island, where he found his ranch so let down that he had to begin nearly all over again. I can imagine what he went through with his dainty and exacting helpmate. She came home in 1904 to get over it, and again I met her out hunting.

"Miles is too good for me," she said the second day as we were jogging home; "he's got such fearful pluck. If only he'd kick his conscience out of the window sometimes. Oh! Mr. Bartlet, I don't want to go back there — I really don't; it's simply deadly. But he says if he gives this up he'll be thirty-eight without a thing to show for it, and just have to cadge round for a job, and he won't do that; but I don't believe I can stand it much longer."

I wrote to Ruding. His answer was dry and inexpressive, but I could read between the lines: Heaven forbid that he should drag his wife out to him again, but he would have to stick it there another two years; then, perhaps, he could sell and buy a farm in England. To clear out now would be ruination. He missed his wife awfully, but — one must hoe one's row, and he would rather she stayed with her people than force herself to rough it out there with him.

Then, of course, came that which a man like Ruding, with his loyalty and his sense of form, is the last to imagine possible. Daughter of Fuljambe met a young man in the

Buffs or Greens or Blues, and after, I am sure, a struggle — she was not a bad little sort — went off with him. That happened early in 1906, just as he was beginning to see the end of his struggle with Bear Ranch. I felt very sorry for him, yet inclined to say: "My dear man, where was your imagination; couldn't you see this was bound to happen with 'daughter of Fuljambe' once she got away from you?" And yet, poor devil, what could he have done?

He came home six thousand miles to give her a divorce. A ghoulish curiosity took me into Court. I never had more whole-hearted admiration for Ruding than I had that day, watching him in that pretentiously crooked Court among us tight-lipped, curly-minded lawyers, giving his unemotional evidence. Straight, thin, lined and brown, with gray already in his peculiar-colored hair, his voice low, his eyes unwavering, in all his lonely figure a sad, quiet protest — it was not I only who was moved by the little speech he made to the Judge: "My Lord, I should like to say that I have no bitter feelings; I think it was my fault for asking a woman to share a rough, lonely life, so far away." It gave me a queer pleasure to see the little bow the Judge made him, as if saying: "Sir, as one gentleman to another." I had meant to get hold of him after the case, but when it came to the point I felt it was the last thing he would want of anyone. He went straight back the six thousand miles and sold his ranch. Cunningham, who used to be in our house, and had a Government post in Esquimault, told me that Ruding made himself quite unpopular over that sale. Some enterprising gentleman, interested in real estate, had reported the discovery of coal seams, which greatly enhanced the value of Bear Ranch and several neighboring properties. Ruding was offered a big sum. He took it, and had already left the neighborhood when the report about coal was duly disproved. Ruding at once offered to cancel the price, and take the agricultural value of the property. His offer was naturally accepted, and the disgust of other owners who had sold on the original report

may be imagined. More wedded to the rights of property they upheld the principle "Caveat emptor," and justified themselves by calling Ruding names. With his diminished proceeds he bought another ranch on the mainland.

How he spent the next eight years I only vaguely know. I don't think he came home at all. Cunningham spoke of him as "Still the same steady-going old chap, awfully respected; but no one knows him very well. He looks much as he did, except that he's gone gray."

Then, like a bolt from hell, came the Great War. I can imagine Ruding almost glad. His imagination would not give him the big horror of the thing; he would see it as the inevitable struggle, the long-expected chance to show what he and his country were made of. And I must confess that on the evidence he seems to have been made of even better stuff than his country. He began by dyeing his hair. By dint of this and by slurring the eight of his age so that it sounded like forty odd, he was accepted, and owing to his Transvaal experience, given a commission in Kitchener's army. But he did not get out to France till early in 1916. He was considered by his Colonel the best officer in the regiment for training recruits, and his hair, of course, had soon gone gray again. They said he chafed terribly at being kept at home. In the spring of 1916 he was mentioned in despatches, and that summer was badly gassed on the Somme. I went to see him in hospital. He had grown a little gray moustache, but otherwise seemed quite unchanged. I grasped at once that he was one of those whose nerve — no matter what happened to him — would see it through. One had the feeling that this would be so as a matter of course, that he himself had not envisaged any other possibility. He was so completely lost in the winning of the war that his own sensations seemed to pass him by. He had become as much of a soldier as the best of those professionally unimaginative stoical creatures, and quite naturally, as if it were in his blood. He dwelt quietly, without visible emotion, in that universal

atmosphere of death. All was in the day's work, so long as the country emerged victorious; nor did there seem the least doubt in his mind but that it would so emerge. A part of me went with him all the way, but a part of me stared at him in curiosity, surprise, admiration, and a sort of contempt, as at a creature too single-hearted and uncomplicated. One side of me was bred like him — armorial bearings, daughter of Ruding, and all the rest of it — the other had new blood with all its doubts and ferments.

I saw him several times in that hospital at Teignmouth, where he recovered slowly.

One day I asked him point blank whether one's nerve was not bound to go in time. He looked a little surprised and said rather coldly: "Not if your heart's in the right place."

That was it to a T. His heart was so deeply rooted in exactly the right place that nothing external could get at it. Whatever downed Ruding would have to blow him up bodily — there was no detaching his heart from the rest of him. And that's what I mean by an inbred quality, the inner pluck that you can bet on. I don't say it's not to be found in private soldiers and "new" people, but not in quite the same — shall we say? — matter-of-course way. When those others have it, they're proud of it or conscious of it, or simply primitively virile and thick-skinned; they don't — like such as Ruding — regard not having it as "impossible," a sort of disgrace. If scientists could examine the nerves of men like him, would they discern a faint difference in their colour or texture — the result of generations of nourishment above the average and of a traditional philosophy which for hundreds of years has held fear to be *the* cardinal offence? I wonder.

He went out again in 1917, and was out for the rest of the war. He did nothing very startling or brilliant; but, as at school, he was always on the ball, finishing as hard as when he started. At the Armistice he was a Lieutenant-

Colonel, and a Major when he was gazetted out, at the age of fifty-three, with the various weaknesses which gas and a prolonged strain leave in a man of that age, but no pensionable disability. He went back to Vancouver. Anyone at all familiar with fruit-growing knows it for a pursuit demanding the most even and constant attention. When Ruding joined up he had perforce left his ranch in the first hands which came along; and at that time, with almost every rancher in like case, those hands were very poor substitutes for the hands of an owner. He went back to a property practically valueless. He was not in sufficient health to sit down for another long struggle to pull it round, as after the Boer War, so he sold it for a song and came home again, full of confidence that, with his record, he would get a job. He found that his case was that of thousands. They didn't want him back in the Army. They were awfully sorry, but they didn't know what they could do for him. The Governmental education and employment schemes, too, seemed all for younger men. He sat down on the song and the savings from his pay to wait for some ship or other out of his fleet of applications to come home. It did not come; his savings went. How did I know all this? I will tell you.

One night last January I had occasion to take a cab from a restaurant in Soho to my Club in Pall Mall. It was wet, and I got in hastily. I was sitting there comatose from my good dinner when I had a queer feeling that I knew the back of the driver. It had — what shall I call it? — a refined look. The man's hair was gray; and I began trying to recollect the profile I had glimpsed when bolting in. Suddenly with a sort of horror the thought flashed through me: Miles Ruding!

It was!

When I got out and we looked each other in the face, he smiled and my lips quivered. "Old chap," I said, "draw your cab up on that stand and get in with me."

When we were sitting together in his cab we lighted

cigarettes, and didn't speak for quite a minute, till I burst out:

"Look here! What does this mean?"

"Bread and butter."

"Good God! And this is what the country ——"

"Bartlet," he said, through curiously set lips, with a little fixed smile about the corners, "cut out all that about the country. I prefer this to any more cadging for a job; that's all."

Silent from shame, I broke out at last: "It's the limit! What about the Government schemes?"

"No go! they're all for younger men."

"My dear chap!" was all I could find to say.

"This isn't a bad life in good weather," he went on with that queer smile; "I haven't much of a chest now."

"Do you mean to say you contemplate going on with this?"

"Till something turns up; but I'm no good at asking for things, Bartlet; I simply can't do it."

"What about your people?"

"Dead or broke."

"Come and stay with me till your ship comes home."

He squeezed my arm and shook his head. That's what's so queer about gentility! If only I could have established a blood tie! Ruding would have taken help or support from his kinsfolk — would have inherited without a qualm from a second cousin that he'd never seen; but from the rest of the world it would be charity. Sitting in that cab of his, he told me, without bitterness, the tale which is that of hundreds since the war. Ruding one could not pity to his face, it would have been impossible. And, when he had finished, I could only mutter:

"Well, I think it's damnable, considering what the country owes you."

He did not answer. You can say what you like about his limitations, but Miles Ruding was bred to keep his form.

I nearly shook his hand off when I left him, and I could see that he disliked that excessive display of feeling. From my Club doorway I looked round. He had resumed his driver's seat, and, through the rain, I saw him with the cigarette between his lips, and the lamplight shining on his lean profile. Very still he sat — symbol of that lost cause, gentility.

JOHN GALSWORTHY

To many who know his work and have heard him lecture here in America, John Galsworthy stands as the typical Englishman of the cultured classes. His pride in his country, his unassuming manner, his personal reserve, and his keen sense of what is just and right are his distinguishing traits. He was born in 1867 and received his early education in Harrow School situated in a suburb of London. After Harrow Mr. Galsworthy went up to Oxford University, and later, following the tradition of his family, began to read for the law. His decision to become a writer altered his plans and sent him off to see the world in Russia, Australia, and other countries. Although he is best known as a novelist, Mr. Galsworthy is a lecturer, a poet, a dramatist, an essayist, and a writer of short stories. In 1925 he assembled his "tales," as he chooses to call them, in one volume to which he gave the alluring title *Caravan*. He says in explanation of the title, "Like some long caravan bearing merchandise of sorts, the tales of a writer wind through the desert of indifference towards the oasis of public favour." *The Man Who Kept His Form* is a choice treasure from this *Caravan*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The Public School at which Miles Ruding and the author met was not a public school in the American sense, but an institution more like our private academy or boarding-school. The Public Schools in England are so called because those first founded were open to all, and because they are, as a rule, controlled by laws known as the Public School Acts. Tuition is not free in these schools as in ours. Harrow School, which Galsworthy attended, is very old and very rich in tradition. In an admirable essay en-

titled *American and Briton*, Mr. Galsworthy has tried to explain the English educational tradition. He says that nowadays in England they no longer care how a fellow is born so long as he behaves like a gentleman, "never shows too much what he's really feeling, never talks of what he's going to do, and always 'plays the game.'" Later in the same essay he speaks of some of the odd traditions of his own school. "In that queer life we had all sorts of unwritten rules of suppression. You must turn up your trousers; must not go out with your umbrella rolled. Your hat must be worn tilted forward; you must not walk two abreast till you reached a certain form, nor be enthusiastic about anything, except such a supreme matter as a drive over the pavilion at cricket, or a run the whole length of the field at football. You must not talk about yourself or your home people, and for any punishment you must assume complete indifference."

2. Does the note above help you to appreciate the significance of the title? You must, of course, understand the meaning of the word *form*. Galsworthy himself defines it in the second paragraph as "a kind of inner pluck bred in them." Can you suggest other definitions? Look up the meaning of the French phrase *noblesse oblige*. *Form* is also used, as Mr. Galsworthy uses it above, to mean a grade or class in school.

3. Describe Bartlet's first meeting with Miles Ruding. Read carefully the paragraph beginning, "Miles Ruding was not brilliant." Discuss in class the sort of boy he must have been. Would he be popular in your school? What little incident is introduced to show his deep affection for his school? The extracts from Mr. Galsworthy's essay should help you to understand Miles Ruding. Show how his "form" was determined by the traditions of his school.

4. What was Ruding's point of view in the trouble between Donelly and the house? What is your opinion of Donelly's conduct? Imagine a similar situation in your own school in which the captain of a team resigns on the eve of an opening match. A fellow like Ruding talks to him and finally persuades him to forget thought of self in

loyalty to the school. Write this as a theme, or build a plot about such a situation and write a short story.

5. Miles Ruding married the wrong woman. Blanche Fuljambe was "a self-centered little person," ill fitted to endure the hardships of ranch life in a province. Describe the home on Vancouver Island to which Ruding took her. His wife should have had certain pioneer qualities. Describe the sort of woman who might have helped him to success.

6. Why does the writer say of Ruding at the beginning of the Great War, "I can imagine Ruding almost glad." Read carefully the paragraph beginning "That was it to a T." Discuss this in class and consider again the significance of the French expression *noblesse oblige.* Describe Bartlet's last meeting with Ruding. We leave him upon the seat of his cab, "the lamplight shining on his lean profile," a forlorn but proud figure, a man whom life has no power to destroy. Galsworthy in a little poem called *Courage* has expressed beautifully the thought of this story.

> "Courage is but a word, and yet, of words,
> The only sentinel of permanence.
> . . . . . .
> 'Tis the mysterious soul which never yields,
> But hales us on and on to breast the rush
> Of all the fortunes we shall happen through
> And when Death calls across his shadowy fields —
> Dying, it answers: "Here! I am not dead!" [1]

Excellent stories by English authors:

A Lodging for the Night — Robert Louis Stevenson
Will o' the Mill — Robert Louis Stevenson
The Man Who Would Be King — Rudyard Kipling
In the Matter of a Private — Rudyard Kipling
The Sentimental Waiter — James Barrie
Acme — John Galsworthy
The Brute — Joseph Conrad
The Inn of the Two Witches — Joseph Conrad
The Idiot — Arnold Bennett
The Three Strangers — Thomas Hardy

[1] Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

APPENDICES

A. PROGRAMS FOR CLASS STUDY

1. Subject: The Ancestry of the Short Story

Before beginning this study the pupil chairman or the teacher should make a survey of the material available in the school and individual libraries and should adapt this program accordingly. In preparation let each pupil look up in the dictionary or in some text on the short story the significance of the terms myth, legend, fairy tale, fable, allegory, parable, tale. Ambitious students will do all the reading suggested; others will be more dependent upon class discussions. The shorter selections may be read aloud, the longer told in abridged form with selected passages read. A part of the program may take the form of reports, as when one pupil tells of the plan of the *Decameron* and another the story of Sir Roger and the Widow gleaned from a number of the *De Coverley Papers*. The reports on Irving, Hawthorne, and Poe may be based upon some good text on American Literature and upon the history of the short story as given in the books suggested in Appendix D. Class discussion of the characteristics of each form should be a part of the program and should prove a stimulating introduction to the study of the modern short story.

Program for Class Study

Fairy Tale of Ancient Lineage — Cinderella
Biblical Story — Ruth and Naomi
Greek Myth — Apollo and Daphne
Story from *The Iliad* — The Quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles
Story from *The Odyssey* — Ulysses on the Isle of Circe
Fable of Æsop — The Lion and the Mouse
Legendary Tale — Saint George and the Dragon
Parable — The Wise and the Foolish Virgins [Bible]
The Plan of Boccaccio's *Decameron*
The Plan of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

The Nun's Priest's Tale — Chaucer
Allegory — The Fight with Apollyon — Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*
The Story of Sir Roger and the Widow — Taken from several of the *De Coverley Papers*
The Place of Washington Irving in the Development of the Modern Short Story
Nathaniel Hawthorne as One of Our First Story Writers
Edgar Allan Poe — Why Call Him the First Writer of Modern Short Stories?

2. Studies in Local Color

Individual students may be especially interested in stories of local color, or classes may wish to take up this study as a special project. The program for class study given below has been used successfully with a number of classes. Each day one section of the country may be taken up, reports given on stories, and bits of description or significant phrases read aloud. Characters distinctive of the section may be discussed and interesting local customs noted. The means used by the different authors to give local color should be compared. In the list below titles of books rather than stories are given, since the selection of the particular story may well be a matter of class or individual opinion.

Around Our United States with the Short Story Writers

New England Life:
A New England Nun — Mary E. Wilkins Freeman
The County Road — Alice Brown
Tales of New England — Sarah Orne Jewett
Hillsboro People — Dorothy Canfield Fisher
New York — "Little Old Bagdad on the Subway":
The Four Million — O. Henry
New York's East Side:
Little Citizens — Myra Kelly
Humoresque — Fannie Hurst
The Problem of the Foreigner:
Hungry Hearts — Anzia Yezierska
The Pennsylvania Dutch:
Stories in *Saturday Evening Post* — Elsie Singmaster

Village Life in Pennsylvania:
Old Chester Tales — Margaret Deland
The Old South:
In Ole Virginia — Thomas Nelson Page
Old New Orleans:
Old Creole Days — George W. Cable
The Negro in the New South:
Folks from Dixie — Paul Laurence Dunbar
Small-Town Life in Kentucky:
Judge Priest and His People — Irvin S. Cobb
Our Southern Mountaineers:
Christmas Eve on Lonesome — John Fox
In the Tennessee Mountains — Charles Egbert Craddock
Stories in *Atlantic Monthly* — Lucy Furman
The Middle West:
Main Travelled Roads — Hamlin Garland
The Romantic West after the Gold Rush:
The Luck of Roaring Camp — Bret Harte
In Alaska:
Love of Life — Jack London

B. HOW SHALL I FIND GOOD SHORT STORIES?

This is a question which the inexperienced reader may well ask. A wise plan is to read by authors. Let us suppose, for example, that you have become interested in Richard Connell. Go to the library and ask for the last volumes of *The Reader's Guide*. Under Richard Connell's name you will find listed stories published by him in magazines. A good library will contain bound volumes of magazines for several years back. Should you wish to know more of his work in book form, *The Short Story Index*, edited by Ina T. Firkins, will give exact references.

Two yearly collections of short stories should be mentioned here. Since 1915 Mr. Edward J. O'Brien has been publishing yearly a volume of *Best Short Stories of the Year*. His stimulating introductory matter and the exhaustive lists appended to his collections are of inestimable value to the student of the short story. The O. Henry Prize Memorial Committee, under the leadership of Dr. Blanche Colton Williams, has done great service in collecting good short stories. In 1918 the Society of

Arts and Sciences established two annual short-story prizes to honor the memory of O. Henry. The prize-winning stories, with other honor stories of the year, are published under the title *O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories*. Many of the stories in this volume are found in the O. Henry collections.

In recent years a demand seems to have arisen for the reprint of good short stories of an earlier date. One of the best of the magazines which attempt to meet this demand is *The Golden Book*, a magazine, as its title announces, "of fiction and true stories that live."

C. STORIES YOUNG STUDENTS HAVE LIKED

1. *Twenty-Five Well-known Stories of Various Types*
How many have you read?

Marjorie Daw	Thomas Bailey Aldrich
The Inconsiderate Waiter	James Barrie
The Love Letters of Smith	H. C. Bunner
Pigs is Pigs	Ellis Parker Butler
The Jumping Frog	Samuel L. Clemens
The Substitute	François Coppée
Gallegher	Richard Harding Davis
The Revolt of Mother	Mary E. Wilkins Freeman
The Three Strangers	Thomas Hardy
The Outcasts of Poker Flat	Bret Harte
The Ambitious Guest	Nathaniel Hawthorne
The Gift of the Magi	O. Henry
A Municipal Report	O. Henry
The Monkey's Paw	W. W. Jacobs
Namgay Doola	Rudyard Kipling
The Ship That Found Herself	Rudyard Kipling
To Build a Fire	Jack London
The Necklace	De Maupassant
Mateo Falcone	Mérimée
The Gold Bug	Edgar Allan Poe
The Cask of Amontillado	Edgar Allan Poe
Markheim	Robert Louis Stevenson
The Sire de Maletroit's Door	Robert Louis Stevenson
The Lady or the Tiger	Frank R. Stockton
Monsieur Beaucaire	Booth Tarkington

2. *Ten French Short Stories*

How many have you read in French?

Le Secret de Maître Cornille [1]	Alphonse Daudet
L'Enfant Espion [1]	Alphonse Daudet
La Chèvre de M. Seguin [2]	Alphonse Daudet
La Dernière Classe [2]	Alphonse Daudet
Le Siège de Berlin [4]	Alphonse Daudet
La Parure [3]	Guy de Maupassant
La Ficelle [3]	Guy de Maupassant
Deux Amis [3]	Guy de Maupassant
La Chapelle Blanche [4]	Jules Lemaître (A Christmas story)
Noiraud [4]	Ludovic Halévy

3. *Twenty-Five Newer Stories and Where to Find Them*

The Water Hole	Maxwell Struthers Burt	O'Brien 1915
Flint and Fire	Dorothy Canfield	Hillsboro People
The Snake Doctor	Irvin Cobb	O. Henry 1922
The Belled Buzzard	Irvin Cobb	American Short Stories, Jessup
Natalka's Portion	Rose Coher.	O'Brien 1922
The Weather Breeder	Merrill Denison	Harper's Magazine, August, 1924
The Open Window	Charles Caldwell Dobie	O'Brien 1918
The Citizen	Dwyer	O'Brien 1915
April 25th, As Usual	Edna Ferber	O. Henry 1919
The Gay Old Dog	Edna Ferber	Cheerful by Request
The Past	Ellen Glasgow	O'Brien 1921
The Token	Joseph Hergesheimer	O'Brien 1922
Humoresque	Fannie Hurst	O. Henry 1919

[1] Included in *Choix de Contes* by Daudet. D. C. Heath Co.
[2] Included in any large collection of Daudet's stories.
[3] Included in *Huit Contes Choisis*. D. C. Heath Co.
[4] Included in *French Reader*, Aldrich and Foster. Ginn and Co.

The Buckpasser	Hugh McNair Kahler	Short Stories by Present-Day Authors, Pence
Willow Walk	Sinclair Lewis	O'Brien 1918
The Elephant Remembers	Edison Marshall	O. Henry 1919
His Job	Grace Sartwell Mason	O. Henry 1923
England to America	Margaret Prescott Montague	O. Henry 1919
The To-day To-morrow	Margaret Prescott Montague	O'Brien 1923
The Stove	Marjorie Pickthall	Angels' Shoes
Five Thousand Dollars Reward	Melville Davisson Post	O. Henry 1919
The Courier of the Czar	Elsie Singmaster	O. Henry 1924
The Gold Brick	Brand Whitlock	Americans All, Heydrick
Not Wanted	Jesse Lynch Williams	O. Henry 1923
Turkey Red	Frances Gilchrist Wood	O. Henry 1919

D. BOOKS ON THE HISTORY AND TECHNIQUE OF THE SHORT STORY

Albright, Evelyn M.: The Short Story — Its Principles and Structure. Macmillan, 1907

Canby, Henry Seidel: A Study of the Short Story. Henry Holt & Co., 1913

Clark, Glenn: A Manual of the Short Story Art. Macmillan, 1922

Cross, E. A.: The Short Story — A Technical and Critical Study. A. C. McClurg & Co., 1914

Esenwein, J. Berg: Writing the Short Story. The Home Correspondence School Press, 1908.

Frederick, John T.: A Handbook of Short Story Writing. Alfred A. Knopf, 1924

Hamilton, Clayton: Materials and Methods of Fiction. Doubleday, Page & Co., 1918

Matthews, Brander: The Short Story. American Book Co., 1907
O'Brien, Edward J.: The Advance of the American Short Story. Dodd, Mead & Co., 1923
Pattee, Fred Lewis: The Development of the American Short Story. Harper & Bros., 1923
Pitkin, Walter B.: How to Write Short Stories. Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1923
Smith, C. Alphonso: The American Short Story. Ginn & Co., 1912
Williams, Blanche Colton: A Handbook on Story Writing. Dodd, Mead & Co., 1917

E. SUGGESTIONS FOR REVIEW OR INDIVIDUAL REPORT

1. Select three short stories which seem to you most successful in achieving singleness of effect. Show in each case how the effect was heightened by economy of detail.
2. Find a story with a good plot. List eight or ten details which the author mentions and show how each is essential to the working out of the plot.
3. After reading the stories in this book and other suggested stories, note the outstanding character in each. Show how some minor character is important only as it influences the major character.
4. A good short story is concerned with a single incident or situation. Verify this statement in five short stories you have read.
5. The element of conflict must enter into the plot of a good short story. Confirm this in each of the following stories: *Prelude*, *The Man Who Cursed the Lilies*, *The Bunker Mouse*, *The Face at the Window*, and *The Heart of Little Shikara*.
6. The theme of a story, or the basic idea upon which the story is built, can usually be stated in a single sentence. The theme of *Macbeth*, briefly stated, is "Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself." State in single sentences the themes of five short stories you have read.

7. List the stories in this collection which make use of local color. In which do geographical names contribute to the local color? To what extent have the authors used dialect or colloquial expressions? When direct description of setting is used, is it found in whole paragraphs or deftly sifted in? Prove your answers by specific references to several stories.
8. In some story of setting not in this collection comment upon the means used by the author to obtain local color.
9. Study the methods of characterization in this collection of stories. In which does the author make use of direct description of character traits or physical appearance? In which does the author create his characters so that they seem to speak and act of their own volition?
10. The names of characters are elements in successful characterization. Make a list of the principal characters in these stories and discuss the appropriateness of their names.
11. Select the story in this collection which seems to you most successful in character portrayal and support your choice in a talk to the class.
12. Study the introductions to these stories. Which begin with dialogue? Which with a description of the setting? In which is the reader plunged most promptly into the action of the story? What specific means are employed in the introductions to attract the reader's interest?
13. In like manner study the conclusions. Are you satisfied with the ending of each? How many end happily? In those which do not, is the ending inevitable, or does it seem to have been contrived by the author? Give instances of forceful concluding sentences.
14. Make a study of the short stories in magazines of the current month. List stories which employ local color, those which excel in characterization, those which present novel situations. Note those also which you would condemn, and give reasons for your decision.
15. After completing your study of the short stories in this book take a vote of the class upon the following points: the best short story, as judged by the standards set in the

introduction; the most interesting character; the most thrilling situation; the best title; the best introduction; the story having the strongest emotional appeal. After voting, open the class to general discussion.